Metalsmith

Winter 1994
Volume 14
Number 1
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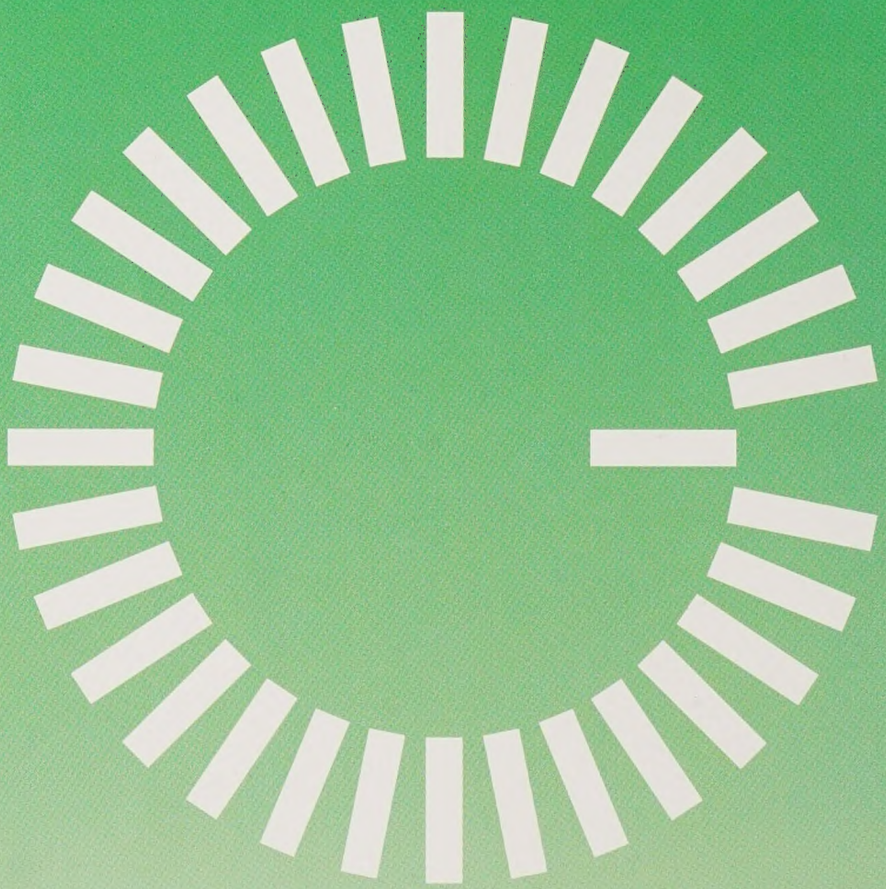

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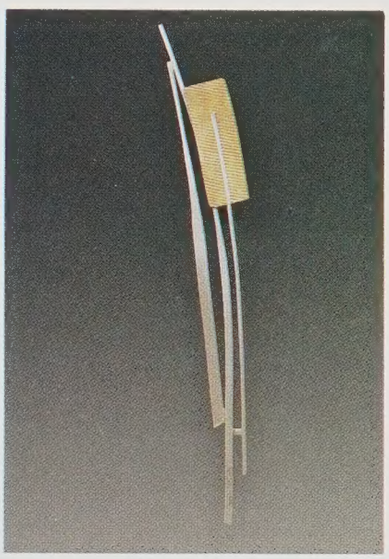

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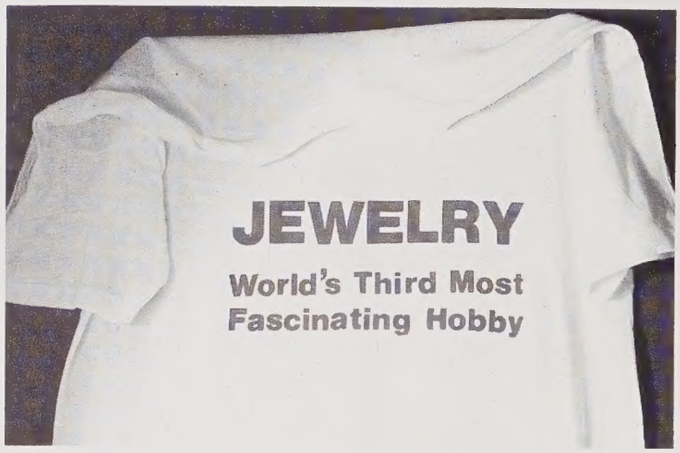

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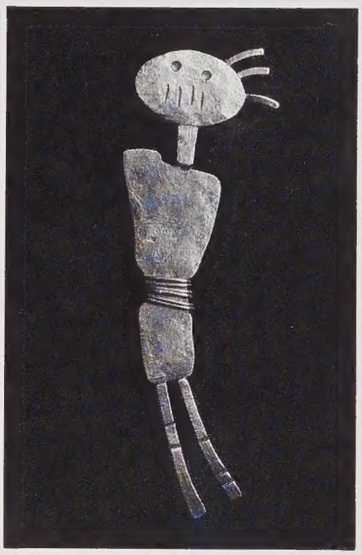

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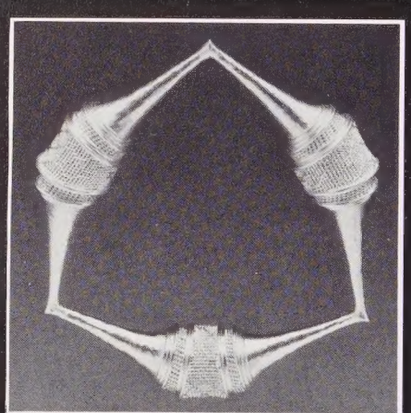

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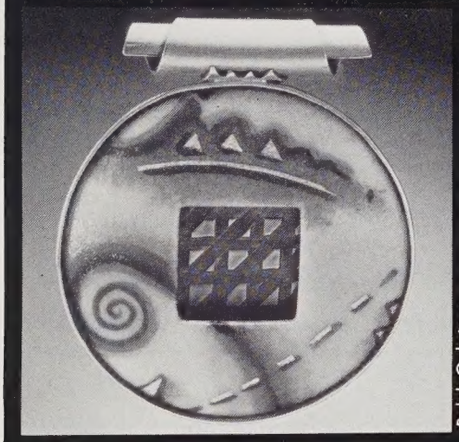

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Editorial

Recently everyone involved with the production of the magazine has been talking about our plans for the first *Metalsmith Exhibition in Print.* The *Exhibition in Print* will be available in the fall of 1994 and it will include the work of 40 – 50 artists who will be chosen by jury from an open competition. Details and a prospectus for the competition can be found within this issue of *Metalsmith.*

The *Exhibition in Print* has long been discussed as one more way that *Metalsmith* magazine and its publisher the Society of North American Goldsmiths can continue to serve and advance the field of metalsmithing. Particularly important during the planning stages was the unanimously felt need for *Metalsmith* to take an active role not only in reporting and discussing the ongoing history of our field but to also seek out practitioners who do not always receive the attention and recognition that they deserve. All of the various factions and interest groups that make up our readership and contributors agree that colleges, universities, galleries, museums, high-end stores, craft shows, fairs and even SNAG conferences are important in disseminating information about the field, but, even they, invariably overlook some of the variety and excellence found in metalsmithing production.

This magazine has always attempted to offer a forum for thoughtful and critical discussion of metalsmithing and provide a pictorial record of some of the finest and most interesting work being produced. The *Exhibition in Print* will in many ways continue that tradition but it will also add a new dimension to the breadth of *Metalsmith's* coverage of the field. I heartily encourage everyone involved in metalsmithing to participate in the competition and to share this information with their colleagues. Please feel free to copy the enclosed entry form to insure that the jurors will be selecting work from the broadest and most comprehensive pool of artists.

As craftspersons we must insure that we do not have to wait for another "Year of the Craft" to display and laud the contributions we make to the aesthetic, intellectual, and cultural heritage of our world. I hope that *Metalsmith's Exhibition in Print* generates as much excitement and sense of promise among the readers as it has generated among those of us who have worked to make it a reality.

F.C.L.

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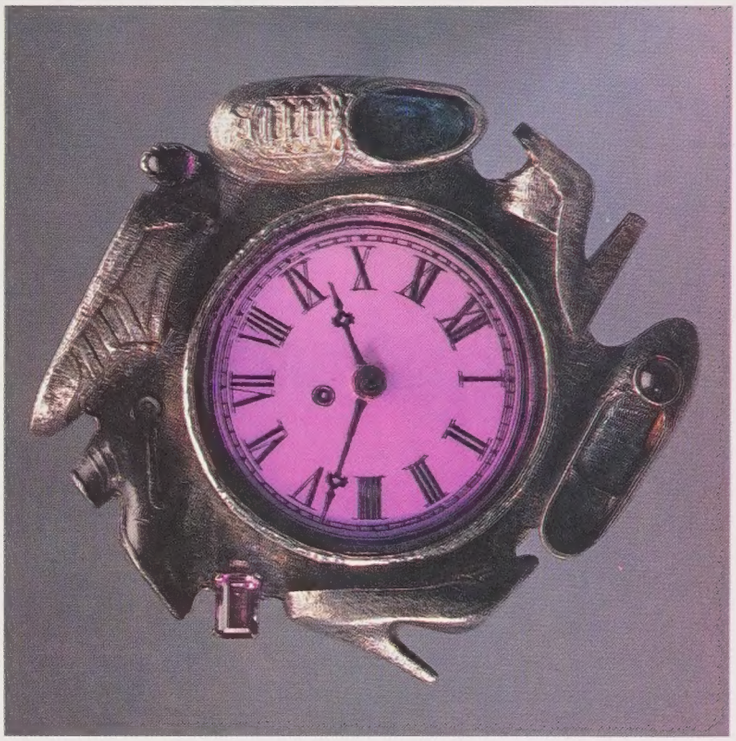

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Runnin Yo Mamma Ragged, 1993
silver, amethyst, found objects,
2½ x 2½ x ¾"
Photograph by Lynn Hanrick; See page 36

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Gijs Bakker, *Botticelli Project*
(Neckpieces, set of three), 1990
gilded brass, plastic, mirror,
laminated photographs, 12" dia (each)
Collection: Helen Drutt, Philadelphia
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Letters

Dear Editor,

I feel I should submit very briefly my feelings about [Bruce] Metcalf's article "On the Nature of Jewelry" pages 22,23, Vol. 13 #1.

On the title "On the Nature of Jewelry" – How presumptuous! Jewelry is artificial, contrived an *invention* of Humans, certainly NOT NATURAL. It is conceptual, intentional, preconceived, anything but NATURAL! Perhaps Metcalf could have said characteristics? Associational considerations of? Jewelry has no nature. IT DOES NOT DO ANYTHING! *HUMANS* do things about, for, by, to, and with it. They make it, wear it, play with it, and yes, get VERBAL about it, but *they* do it, not the jewelry.

Now, on the characteristics of ARTSPEAK in general, I submit the following, urged on by Donald Friedlich, (in Baltimore) who strongly recommended I send this to you ASAP:

Critical Mass

"Artspeak" is a P.R. Technique
To create a mystique
To confuse the layman into thinking
He needs an interpreter or guide:
The creator of "Artspeak", of course.

It is a rationale *after* the fact.
It has *never* changed the fact.
It retroactively gives the art
Permission to exist.
It justifies the activity of the rationalizer.

Respectfully submitted,
Carrie Adell

Dear Editor,

I want to congratulate and thank you for your work on *Metalsmith.* I especially enjoyed the issue with the article on Phil Baldwin and the same issue's very striking cover.

Now, page 50, Letters [Spring 1993, Volume 13, Number 2]. A big BRAVO to Catherine Butler. She hit the nail squarely in each paragraph. Butler's next to last paragraph contains my exact thoughts. I'm absolutely certain many readers agree with her. The "Is it Art?" and "When will it be Art?" isn't harping, it's most often an expression of insecurity or plain old B.S.

And that reminds me of the right hand side of Page 50. I'll let the many talented people insulted by Mr. Gentille speak for themselves. I do encourage Gentille to write a perfect book covering the areas presented by Ms. Blauer. Do us a service and tell us what is good and bad, right and wrong but be sure to say WHY. List your "innumerable giant steppingstones" forward. Lighten up Tom.

Chuck Evans, Ames, Iowa

Obituary: Arthur A. Vierthaler

by Lynn Sulis Fieldhouse

The passing on August 1, of Arthur A. Vierthaler, age 76, Emeritus Professor of Art, University of Wisconsin, Madison, leaves a hole in the hearts of many and in the world itself. Those who knew and worked with Art will forever feel his enthusiasm and the inspiration which he instilled in them. In 35 years of teaching, he touched many. He was the consummate teacher. He had a vitality and enthusiasm that could create a fire in his students to last a lifetime. He lived life to the hilt and all who came in contact with him will never forget that experience.

When he first came to UW, Madison after serving in the army in WWII, he updated the Art Metals lab and built a program that was to heavily influence the direction of metals in this country through such graduates as Robert von Neumann, Phil Fike, Fred Woell, William Haendel, Irvin Kinney, Lee Peck, Bob Christianson, and Mark Bohrod to name only a few. These craftsmen carried forth his demands for excellence in design and craftsmanship. He was one of the first in the field to mold new directions in contemporary metals.

Humanitarian would definitely describe Arthur. He came across as gruff, though he could not stand injustice; his heart was made of gold. He was a mentor to many and a friend to all and his students were of uppermost importance to him. What one learned in Art Vierthaler's class was not simply technique and the working of metal, but also a verve for life, its philosophies, humor, creative problem solving, and the importance of people and relationships, all that makes up the creative spirit within us.

Early in his career, he was a special correspondent for the Milwaukee Journal. Later his metal design and fabrications won him numerous international awards. Anything that Arthur did, he put his all into it. He loved the water and was an ardent sailor, who logged many miles on the Great Lakes, the Atlantic Ocean and in the Caribbean. He held a degree in Geology which he used extensively, passing a thorough knowledge of gemstones on to his metals students. He founded the Madison Lapidary Club, which still thrives. A skilled scuba diver, he dove for greenstone and thompsonite on the bottom of Lake Superior and many will remember his dives down into an abandoned shaft of an old silver mine that the lake had reclaimed. There seemed to be no limit to Arthur's energies.

Upon retirement, he moved with wife Ruth to Fort Pierce, Florida where he could enjoy his boat, a sailing studio, year round. His creativity continued with drawings and exquisite paintings of undersea life.

His ashes will be spread upon those waters so beloved by him. Arthur Vierthaler continues to be the driving force for many of us. The strength and the memories endure.

Lynn Sulis Fieldhouse is a metalsmith who lives in Madison, Wisconsin.

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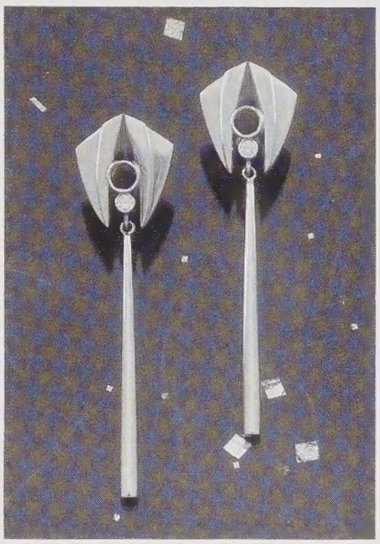

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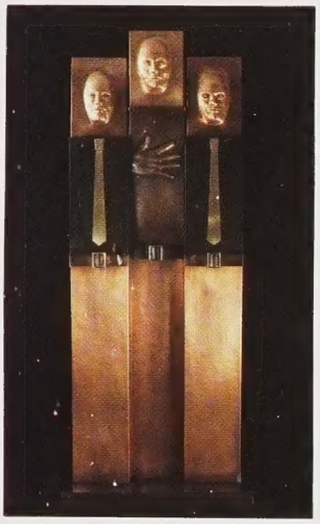

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Recent Sightings

BY BRUCE METCALF

Concept

At the start of William Harper's lecture at the 1993 SNAG conference, he conspicuously mentioned that he was going to talk about his concepts. Now there's a loaded word: "concepts". It calls up associations with conceptual art, long articles in art magazines that read as if they were badly translated from German, or graduate seminars in every M.F.A. program in the country. "Concepts" has such weighty (but favorably arty) implications, it's even the name of a jewelry gallery in California. We now expect "art" and "concept" to be inextricably tied together. If we were to believe the art magazines, an artist without a concept is like a car without gasoline.

Harper proceeded to talk about the various intentions he embeds in his jewelry. He talked about how the true competence of enameling lies in creating a sense of preciousness, and how that property is a constant reference and counterpoint in his work. Much of his discussion concerned his interest in non-western cultures. He talked at length about his take on several Christian myths, particularly the twisted sexuality of St. Sebastian and the parallels between St. Anthony and the modern artist. The subject of multiculturalism came up, although he did not appear to understand much about it. Also, some young women thought Harper made a few dumbly sexist remarks. But mostly the lecture was thoughtful and witty. The crowd gave him a standing ovation.

Initially, I was perplexed by the notion of concept. Were these really "concepts" that Harper spoke about? If the ambition of some segments of the jewelry field is to become artists – and Harper is clearly in this camp – is the allowable standard of what constitutes a legitimate concept the same for the crafts as it is for the other arts? Was William Harper speaking about a concept in the same way, for instance, as a conceptual artist would?

Consider the benchmark piece of conceptual art for our century: Duchamp's pseudonymously signed urinal. The object itself was an ordinary commercial fitting, chosen for its absolute distinction from everything that had, up until then, been considered as art. In a single stroke, Duchamp inverted every available frame of reference, calling into question received notions of aesthetic quality, beauty, authorship, mastery, and pretty much anything else that great art was supposed to represent. The artfulness of Duchamp's urinal is not in the object itself (after all, it's just plumbing), but in what Duchamp forced his audience to consider. Here, the object is a screen of little substance. The real issue lies beyond it, in the realms of ontology and epistemology.

Now that the urinal has been co-opted into the mainstream, it haunts all of twentieth-century art. It has three profound implications for everything we wish to consider as art. First, it proposes that the art object itself is less important than the concepts it represents. Serious discourse in the arts has shifted from consideration of the nature of the object or even of visual experience, to discourses on more rarefied philosophical issues, even to examination of discourse itself. Secondly, it establishes a system in which radicalism, criticality, inversion, and violation of the status quo become the highest positive values. The unspoken demand is that great art of the present-day must be as stunning to us as the urinal was in Duchamp's day. And third, it implies that any return to the traditional positions that Duchamp attacked is reactionary and wrong. If you take the urinal seriously, retreat is impossible.

And so the relation between object and idea is constituted. Nowadays, it seems to be written in stone, or at least in porcelain.

Duchamp's urinal authoritatively defines what is properly conceptual, and what is not. Such an agenda is not particularly sympathetic to craft, nor to William Harper. His jewelry is insistently material and sensual in the first place, competing for attention with any conceptual program. Certain of Harper's ideas, like his emphasis on preciousness, would gain little respect among many art critics, to whom "preciousness" is a dirty word. Harper's personal narrative is justified by Romantic theories of expression that are no longer persuasive to the artistic avant-garde. And his vaguely uninformed musings on multiculturalism clearly showed that he is not up on the latest hot-button art world issues. An observer who believes in the essential artfulness of Duchamp's urinal would find Harper's musings to be shallow and off-the-mark: not "conceptual" enough. I could easily imagine such a response, and yet it puzzled me.

Whatever Harper's limitations might be, he is still a thoughtful artist. Why should his life not be subject matter for his art? Is the story of his painful adjustment to partial blindness any less compelling than a discourse on semiotics? Why should a contemporary take on Christian myth be excluded from the realm of the conceptual? And even if he flubbed multiculturalism, is he any different from the many hot young artists and writers who failed to grasp deconstruction, or completely misunderstood chaos theory?

What we have is a clash of cultures. On one hand we have the children of Marcel Duchamp, with a stringent agenda that hasn't changed much in 70 years. Modernism or Postmodernism, the project is much the same: radicalism, criticality, inversion, and violation of the status quo. Either way, art becomes a branch of philosophy. You can dematerialize the art object into pure philosophy and still have art.

But a craft object dissolved into pure idea is no longer craft. Craft culture (for the most part) refuses to turn the object into a transparent vessel for philosophical musings. Because the craft object is necessarily and insistently physical, and because craftswomen and craftsmen spend so much time learning the mastery of a chosen material, it's no wonder that the crafts have not lined up behind Duchamp. Craft insists on remaining firmly connected to life-as-lived: in being used, as jewelry is; or in serving as a platform to talk about issues we feel deeply about, the way Harper uses his jewelry to talk about his blindness. Nor has craft ever shown much interest in violation and inversion. Instead, ideas about living a decent life, about service, or beauty, or healing are more likely to appear on the craft agenda. These are all concepts, too. It is the art world's great loss that the more humanistic (if less rigorous) ideas embraced by the craft culture somehow don't look like real concepts.

Bruce Metcalf spends a lot of time thinking about concepts in Philadelphia.

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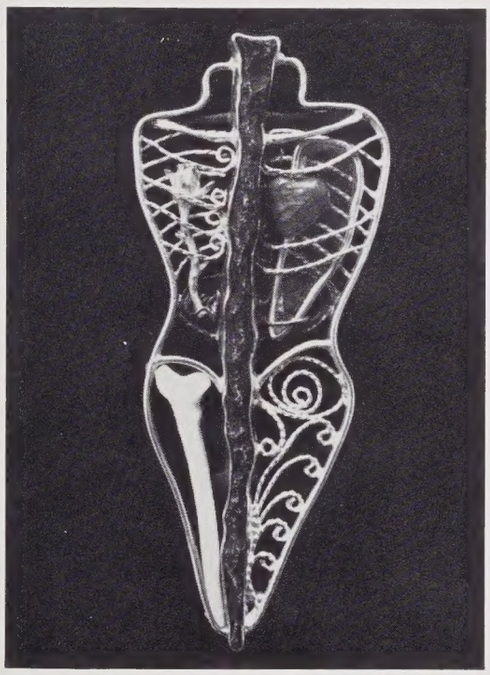

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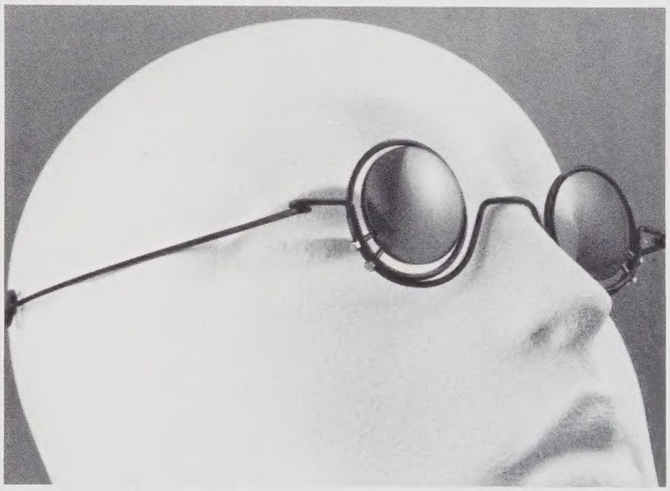

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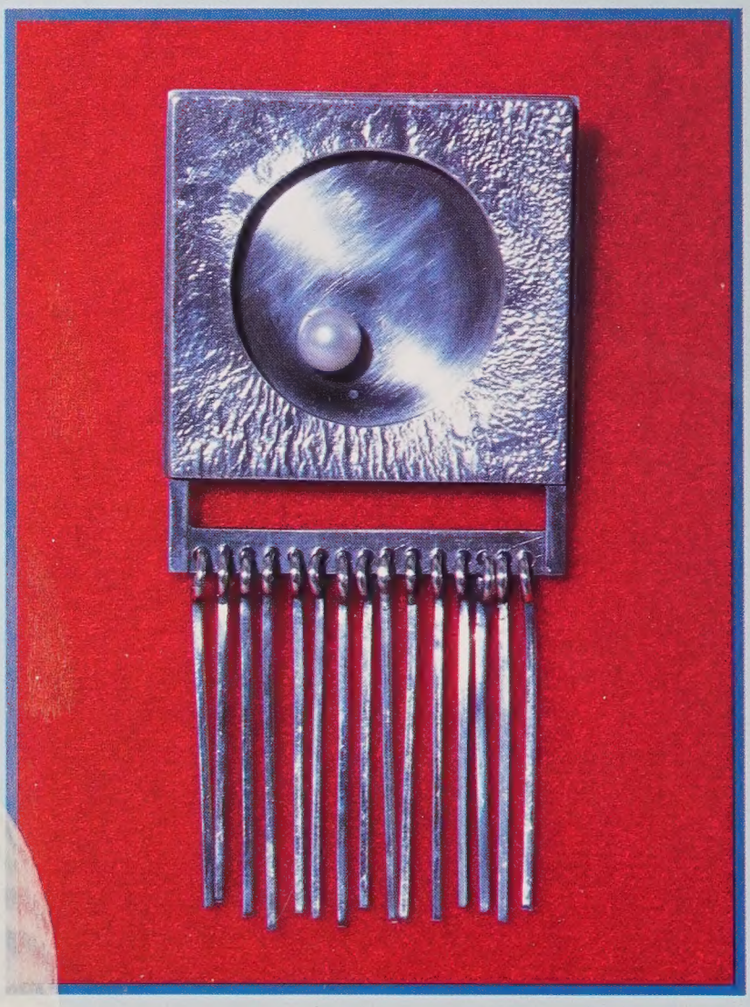


A Legacy in American Metalsmithing

by Richard Helzer

It was 9:00 in the morning in Lawrence, Kansas and Carlyle Smith was heading for his jewelry studio, as he has done nearly every day since he retired from teaching at the University of Kansas in 1977. It was a pleasure to recently visit him there and to view his new work. The new pieces of jewelry are mostly commissions and these elegant objects are as steady and as directed to design and craftsmanship as is all of his previous work that I remember. I see in this accomplished artist's jewelry an interwoven mixture of his life as a jeweler/silversmith, dedicated teacher, friend and supporter, and devotee to the field of metalsmithing.

My original introduction to Carlyle Smith was in the summer of 1967 at the University of Kansas, where I intended to pursue a Master's of Education program. I had recently completed an undergraduate degree in Art Education, and thought of myself primarily as a painter. Curiosity caused me to enroll in a jewelry class taught by Smith that summer. His impact was so profound that I immediately applied for the M.F.A. program in Jewelry and Metalsmithing. The stimulation and support that I received that summer was to benefit my life as an artist and teacher forever. At a time when I needed direction and confidence in my work, Smith provided encouragement and enthusiasm, which have always been the keys to his teaching philosophy.

Smith's involvement in metals began when he enrolled at the Rhode Island School of Design in 1927. He began working with Antonio Cirino, head of the silversmithing program and distinguished author of *Jewelry Making and Design* (now in its fourth edition). After Smith had been enrolled for one semester, Mr. Cirino asked him to teach an art metal class at the Providence Boys' Club, which he accepted and he continued to teach classes there throughout his graduate career. After graduating from R.I.S.D. in 1931 and eager to continue teaching, Smith found himself in the midst of the Great Depression, and faced with the necessity of a five-year apprenticeship in the field before his application for a teaching position would be considered. "That left me out in the cold," Carlyle said, "so I apprenticed with the Augustus F. Rose Metal Craft Shop. At the end of that five years time, Mr. Rose wrote a letter signifying the fact that I had been employed there under a Master Craftsman, and I then received my teacher's certificate." The next year Smith went to teach in the Providence Public Schools. Because Providence was then the jewelry manufacturing center of the United States, and metal working was very much a part of the public school curriculum, Smith was able to find a teaching position.

Throughout this period Smith continued working with Augustus Rose, who was also involved with the Providence Public Schools. Those early years teaching coupled with a strong relationship with Cirino and Rose, gave Smith the strong foundation in metalsmithing education which would develop into a lifelong commitment to teaching.

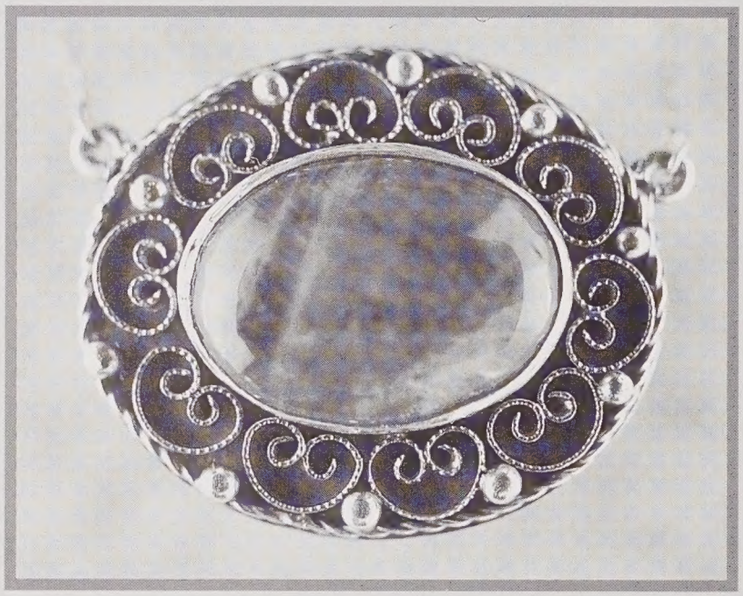
CLOCKWISE
BEGINNING TOP LEFT

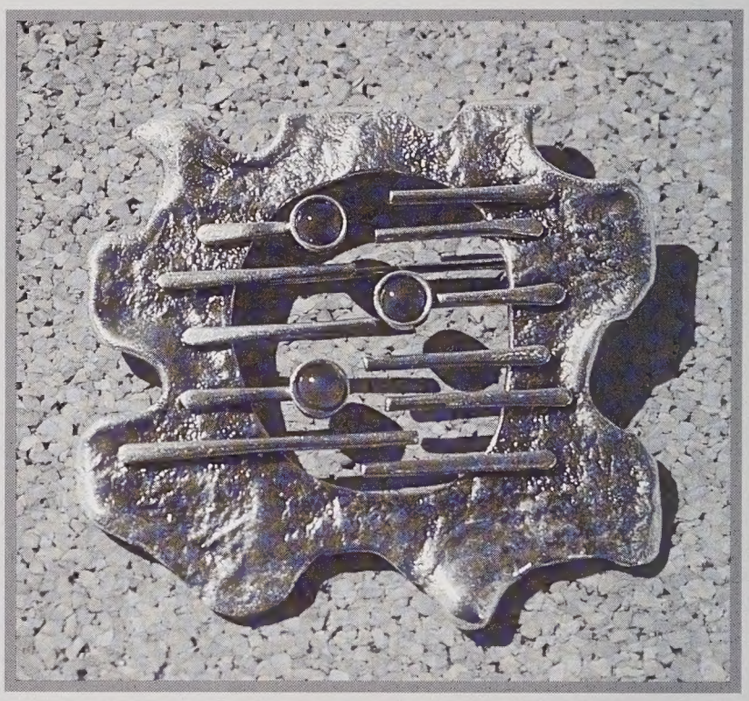
Brooch, 1952
sterling

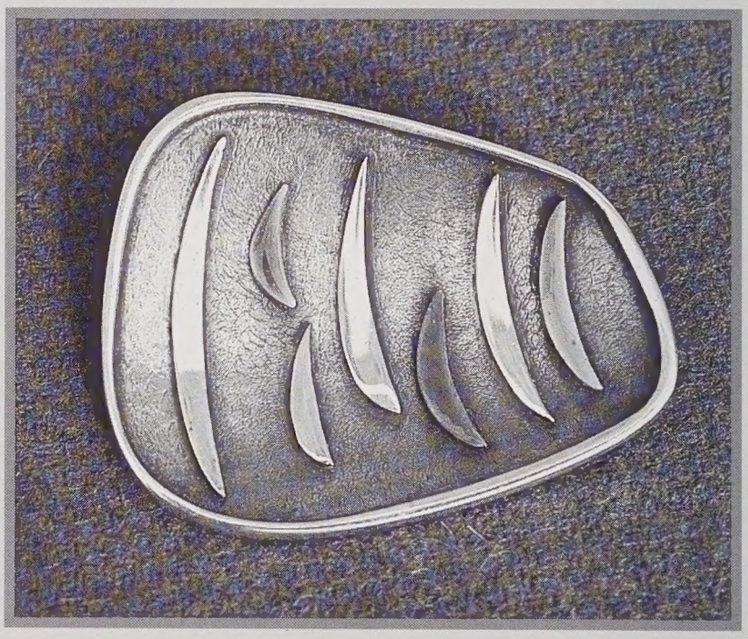
Pin, 1959
cast sterling, gemstones

Pin, 1976
sterling, pearl

Brooch, 1968
sterling, 14k gold







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BEGINNING TOP LEFT

Pendant, 1932
silver, amethyst quartz

Brooch, 1954
reticulated sterling,
carnelians

Brooch, 1956
sterling, enamel

Brooch, 1957
sterling
Collection: Renwick
Gallery, Washington, D.C.

During World War II the teaching of metalwork became particularly challenging because the supplies of metal were shut off to everyone except the military industry. Smith and his students used large tin cans for metal working material. They would open them up and use the flat stock for fabrication. One project designed by Smith during this period was a metal tray that was eventually developed into an ashtray, and was sent to U.S.O. centers all over the United States. During the later war years, Smith was employed by the Navy to supervise the training program for the American Optical Company, which was doing naval contract work for eye glasses. Using his skills as a teacher, Smith set up training programs for new employees at all of the company plants.

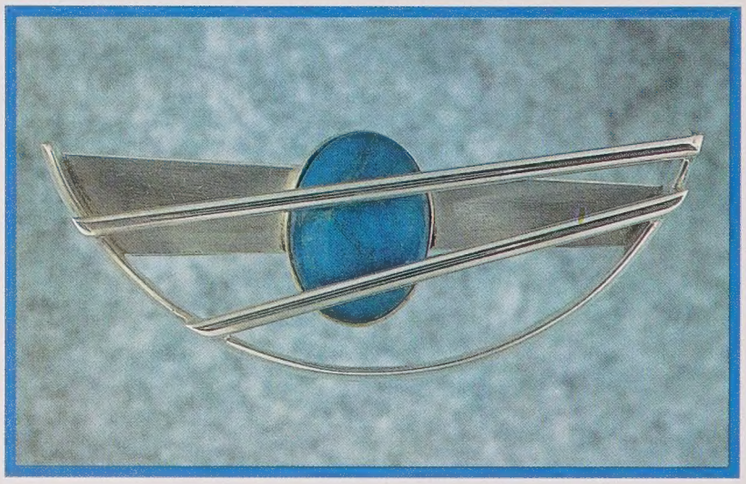
In 1947 Carlyle Smith was lured to Lawrence, Kansas at the invitation of Majorie Whitney, who was chair of the Department of Design at the University of Kansas. Miss Whitney asked Smith to set up a program in jewelry and silversmithing and it was there that he would spend the next thirty years working, teaching, and influencing generations of metalsmiths through his creative example.

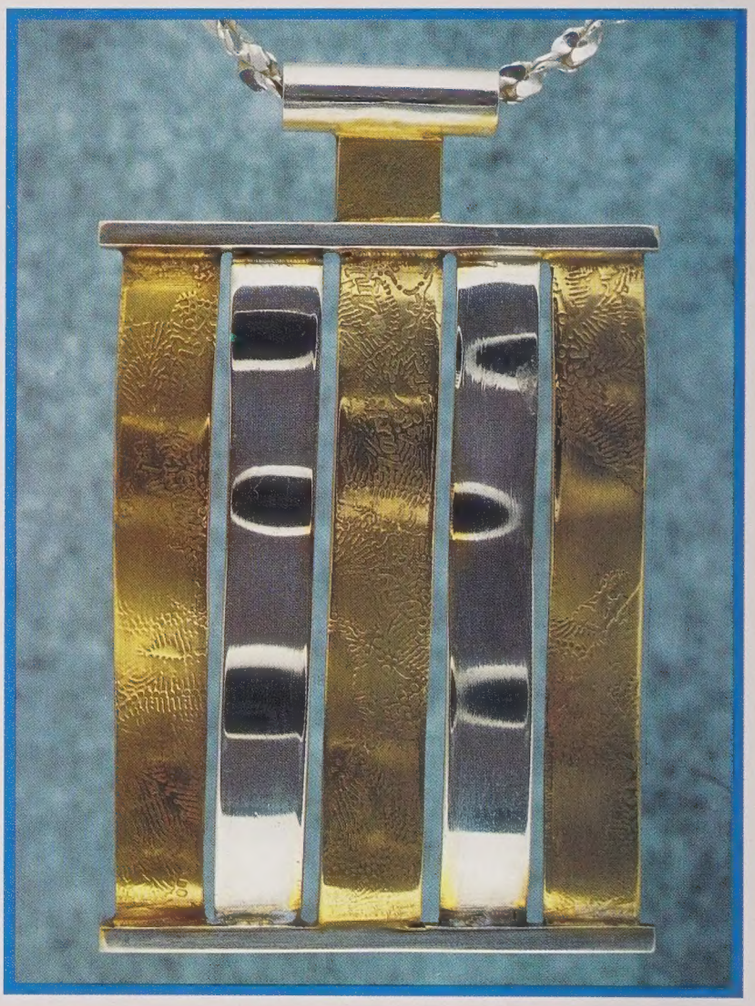
Smith's first semester of teaching included design, lettering, color theory, and one course in jewelry making. With this meager beginning, the program in jewelry and silversmithing was established. During the summer of that busy first year at the University of Kansas, he was selected to study with the renowned silversmith, William Bennett, of the Sheffield England College of Art. The workshop was set up by Margaret Craver and sponsored by the Handy and Harmon Gold and Silver Refiners in New York. There were nine teachers of silversmithing selected to participate in the workshop which promoted technical and philosophical concepts in silversmithing education. The Handy and Harmon workshops set the stage for the emergence of jewelry and silversmithing as an important component in Art School Curriculum. Carlyle Smith is credited with starting the first curriculum in silversmithing leading to bachelor's and master's degrees at a state university.

Smith has had a tremendous impact upon students, most of whom regard him as the principal influence on their creative and professional development. He believes in the ultimate importance of a private space needed for personal creativity for each student. He is known not just for teaching technical skill and craftsmanship, but for nurturing the individual as well. Smith also instilled a strong sense of community in the jewelry and silversmithing studios.

Recently many of his former students have made the pilgrimage back to Lawrence to see their professor; respect runs deep for the professor and mentor, not only for what he has given to the field of metalsmithing, but for the friendship he offered and the affect he has had on students' lives. In a letter, occasioned by Smith's retirement from teaching in 1977, three former students wrote: "More than the skills you taught us, we remember the morning coffee and doughnuts and the many times we just chatted about life." Another student stated: "Without your constant help and encouragement, I would not have this wonderful life working in my craft and teaching the students I love so much, I thank you for the opportunity you have given me."

The mark that Smith has left on the field of metalsmithing stretches far beyond the confines of Lawrence, Kansas. Graduates of the Jewelry and Silversmithing program at K.U. extend to several generations and include Lois Betteridge, Lee Carrell, James Connely, Robert Ebendorf, Julie Fluker, Lee Hageman, Marilyn Herrmann, Ron Hickman, Ron Hinton, Klaus Kallenberger, Brent Kington, Jerry Krebs, Condon Kuhl, Curtis Lafollet, Gary Linde, Sue Mahlstadt, Glenice Matthews, Richard Mawdsley, Robert Montgomery, Mike Oliver, Bob Pringle, John Queen, John Satterfield, Ron Wyanco, and many, many others.





Smith sums up his thirty years at the University of Kansas by stating that he stayed at the university for so long because of the climate,

> "...and I don't mean the weather. I mean the academic climate of the university. I could have made more money at other schools, a lot of us could have, but that did not concern me. I liked the working conditions, I never asked the university or Dean for anything that wasn't approved. Of course I didn't ask for much anyway, but when I did it was always okayed. This makes for nice relationships and nice working conditions. I love the University of Kansas, and I am glad I stayed here for thirty years."

And because of his commitment and his successful teaching career at K.U., the new metalsmithing studio is named the Carlyle H. Smith Metalsmithing and Jewelry Studio.

As if the task of building and maintaining the program at K.U. was not enough, Smith was also instrumental in developing other silversmithing curriculums and spreading his artistic sensibilities through workshops and courses around the world. In 1964 he traveled to Costa Rica as part of a K.U. Carnegie summer grant. The next year Smith and his wife, Isabelle were named directors of the K.U. Junior Year Abroad Program. That year was spent in Costa Rica where Smith became involved in the School of Fine Arts at the University of Costa Rica. While there, he introduced the first course in jewelry and silversmithing in a Central American University. Smith says that his goal was to get the Costa Rican art students *not* to imitate the kind of objects they saw produced in the U.S.; but, to respond to their own environment. In other travels, Smith assisted in developing a silversmithing program in Guadalajara, and a summer jewelry course for New Mexico State University, where he taught for seven summers.

In combination with a compliment to a successful teaching career, there have been important commissions, these include: a chalice for the Trinity Episcopal Church in Lawrence, Kansas; an Abbots ring and pectoral cross for St. Benedicts Abbey, Atchison, Kansas; and the Chancellor's collar and mace for the University of Kansas. In addition, the Renwick Gallery has purchased a brooch that was made in 1957, and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts has recently acquired several pieces of his jewelry and hollowware.

It is Smith's positive encouragement that everyone he worked with remembers most. Lee Hageman, now the chair of the Art Department at Northwest Missouri State University, talks about Carlyle Smith as his mentor. "He is a genuinely concerned person who I think had a great influence on my studies. Without him I would probably still be a Kansas farm boy. He has a positive attitude toward everything, and he always tried to eliminate the negative."

These days Carlyle Smith works in his studio in Lawrence, Kansas. He does not foresee slowing down. He says: "I think the secret to keeping active is I don't just sit. I work in my studio and each afternoon my wife and I go out rain or shine. I don't think I'll retire."

The contributions that Carlyle Smith has made to jewelry and silversmithing education are profound. For forty years, students have had the opportunity to share in this renowned educators talents and abilities. Smith brought to the studio a zest for life and an enthusiasm for making jewelry. These attributes have influenced the lives and careers of the scores of students he has trained, and they will surely continue the process of education which he started for them and many others.

CLOCKWISE
BEGINNING TOP LEFT

Pendant, 1992
14k, sterling, green amethyst

Pendant, 1992
bronze, 24k gold plate

Brooch, 1993
silver, tourquoise

Pendant, 1993
silver, tourquoise

Richard Helzer's longtime association with Carlyle Smith began in 1967 while attending graduate school at K.U.. Helzer is now a Professor of Art at Montana State University, in Bozeman, Montana, where he has been teaching metalsmithing since 1970.

Learning Through Jewelry

by Janet Koplos

Gijs Bakker's life is inextricably intertwined with that of Emmy van Leersum (1930-1984), but his work has taken an independent course. They collaborated in the early days of their marriage in the mid-'60s, and he was sometimes involved in executing the jewelry that she designed; he also made works of his own that were specifically associated with her, most famously the "Profile Jewel" of 1974. It's a slender steel band that exactly follows her profile from the top of her head to the bottom of her chin, and is held in place by spectacle-like wires over her ears. It has been called a "verbal chastity belt,"[1] which may be why she looks so wary in the much-reproduced photograph in which she wears it. He describes it simply as the most individual piece of jewelry anyone could have.[2]

Bakker also has a work life entirely his own, one that has included a broader range than van Leersum's jewelry and clothing. He is accurately described as a designer, although he's best known in the U.S. for the photo-based jewelry he continues to produce and show here with the Helen Drutt Gallery. He has also designed chairs, lamps, loudspeakers, the eyeglasses he wears, and even a house (the final collaboration with van Leersum).[3]

Bakker studied from 1958 to '62 at what is now the Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam. He was from a non-artistic family – his childhood environment included music and books, but not art – but somehow drawing was the only thing he liked to do, so he went to art school. He had no particular goal in mind and happened to take a jewelry course, where he found his field and his wife.

That last was not quite so straightforward, though. When Gijs and Emmy met, she was 29. He remembers her as being a rather stiff bourgeois lady with a permanent wave and a husband; a former dancer and kindergarten teacher, she was struggling to start out on a new career path. She saw him, he says, as a quiet chap with workman's hands. He was 17 then. When he left the school he spent a year in Sweden studying Scandinavian design, which he thought was the height of clarity and sobriety. On his return to Holland he worked as assistant to a silver cutlery designer for three years. He says he enjoyed the work but the slowness of progress and the atmosphere of working in a factory irritated him and finally led him to break free.

He and van Leersum began sharing a studio in Utrecht in 1965. It was a cellar workshop and sales gallery along one of the old city's canals. There, he says, they were for the first time "confronted with the public." People entering the shop tended to look at how things were being made and not at the finished work in the vitrines. They resented this interest in process and wanted concentration on the object. "We learned from this, but it wasn't pleasant at the moment," Bakker says. "You only know later." He notes that today Dutch artists are more protected by government support, and as a consequence "they don't know what it's like to be thrown to the lions" [the public]. What he and van Leersum learned, he says, was "*not* to compromise but to be strong in our own convictions."

CIRCLE IMAGE

Profile Jewel, late '60s
stainless steel
Photograph by Gijs Bakker

FULL PAGE IMAGE

Stovepipe Bracelet and Necklace, 1967
steel

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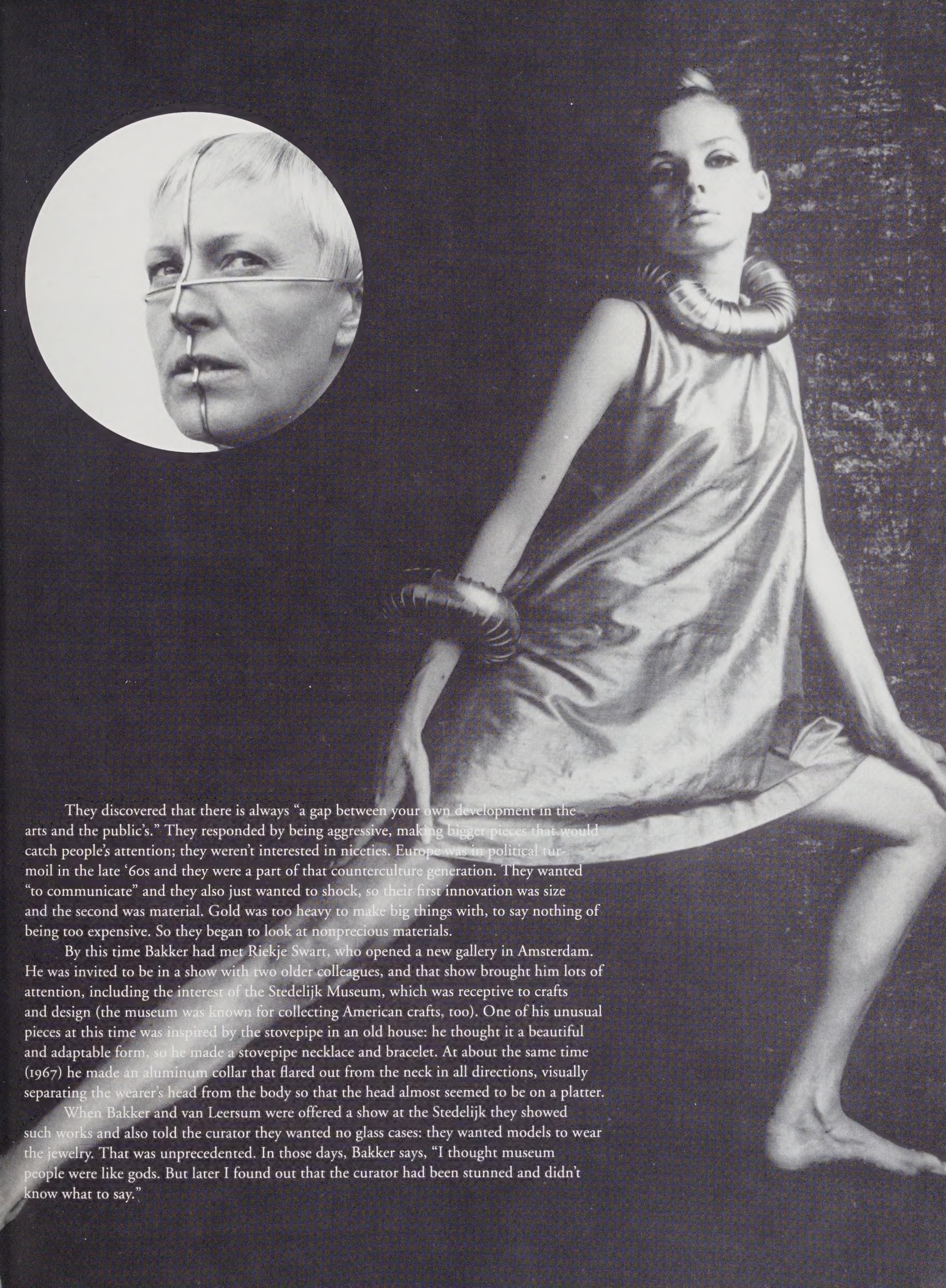


They discovered that there is always "a gap between your own development in the arts and the public's." They responded by being aggressive, making bigger pieces that would catch people's attention; they weren't interested in niceties. Europe was in political turmoil in the late '60s and they were a part of that counterculture generation. They wanted "to communicate" and they also just wanted to shock, so their first innovation was size and the second was material. Gold was too heavy to make big things with, to say nothing of being too expensive. So they began to look at nonprecious materials.

By this time Bakker had met Riekje Swart, who opened a new gallery in Amsterdam. He was invited to be in a show with two older colleagues, and that show brought him lots of attention, including the interest of the Stedelijk Museum, which was receptive to crafts and design (the museum was known for collecting American crafts, too). One of his unusual pieces at this time was inspired by the stovepipe in an old house: he thought it a beautiful and adaptable form, so he made a stovepipe necklace and bracelet. At about the same time (1967) he made an aluminum collar that flared out from the neck in all directions, visually separating the wearer's head from the body so that the head almost seemed to be on a platter.

When Bakker and van Leersum were offered a show at the Stedelijk they showed such works and also told the curator they wanted no glass cases: they wanted models to wear the jewelry. That was unprecedented. In those days, Bakker says, "I thought museum people were like gods. But later I found out that the curator had been stunned and didn't know what to say."

The art world responded favorably to these innovations: Bakker and van Leersum found support among artists, and art critics wrote about the work. Architects were then, and continued to be, their clients. Much of the craft world, however, responded with hostility, declaring that the works did not involve any craftmanship. Bakker points out that the aluminum they were using was, as a material, inferior to gold and silver. It was hard to hammer and then hard to polish. But, he says, they were "stupid" enough to use it because they were driven by the idea rather than by any considerations of convenience.

After these "statement" works, they began to design and produce multiples, bracelets mainly, with the help of two or three assistants. They called their shop a "gallery of reproducible art." They were trying to make jewelry cheaply, so that it could be bought by their own generation rather than by the wealthy. This was social jewelry, expressing a philosophical position of the time and showing that they were up-to-date.

(This issue of social jewelry still interests him today. He says young jewelers now ask why jewelry is so isolated; he notes, in answer, that art has grown that way, too. "You're a part of your time and society," Bakker says. "Artists do not invent out of their *selves,* but out of their *time,*" he believes. Yet when he looks at jewelry of the 1980s he sees only decoration – no concepts, no contribution to current issues. "Nothing of what is happening shows in jewelry! It's so boring – just nice things," he says, noting the exclusion of Manfred Bishoff and Otto Künzli from this criticism.)

Conceptual jewelry followed the multiples of the '60s. Bakker's "shadow jewelry" resulted from an attempt to find "the absolute minimum of form with the absolute maximum presence of the body." He used, for example, a thin gold wire, which was pushed up on the arm until it was tight and then removed, leaving a groove in the skin. "The older you are the better it works because the longer the imprint remains," he says. This was an effort to "look to ourselves as forms as well as personalities." Another example is that "Profile Jewel" of van Leersum, which followed from a symposium on stainless steel he had attended in Austria. He saw colleagues struggling to work that difficult industrial material according to the traditions of goldsmithing; he tried to think another way. He made a profile for Fritz Maierhofer, who, with his long hair, looked like Christ with the thing strapped onto his forehead and throat, Bakker says.

Bakker's invention of the profiles was no different from how a painter or sculpture works conceptually. He believes that craftmakers are apt to produce work that proves their skills, and he says this attention to craft is a mistake: "If you *have* skill you're not conscious of technique." On the other hand, over the years he has come to believe that education in basic techniques is crucial. He says he rebelled against his own classical training by not teaching it to his students, but he now sees that as a mistake. He suspects the same thing happened in the U.S., because when he has challenged American students with conceptual assignments, they have spent so much time struggling with how to execute an idea that they have given too little attention to the idea itself.

Bakker's jewelry of the '70s and '80s seems to evade issues of craftsmanship entirely. He has concentrated on photographic images laminated to make wearables of various forms. In the mid-'70s he made linen bibs (tied onto the neck, like baby bibs) printed with a photograph of the wearer's bare chest – male or female. There is an amusing yet almost disorienting doubleness in seeing the clothed person adorned with his or her nakedness, as if one suddenly had x-ray eyes.

Other photo-jewelry includes a series of circular collars entitled "Queens," each of which is a laminated photograph of a woman's mostly bare shoulders adorned with crown jewels. He made irregular-shaped collars of blown-up photographs of flowers in which the wearer's head, in the center, looks like some eccentric pistil. And he has used many newspaper sports images – of divers, pole vaulters, etc. – usually embellished with precious metal or stones (for example, gold wires outline a diver's rippling hair). This is a different kind of doubleness: Bakker makes the object a kind of oxymoron by combining photographic imagery, a commonplace and disposable element in the 20th-century, with such valuable materials. The photographic jewelry is so different in tone from the profiles and the shadow jewelry that one realizes how impossible it is to pigeonhole Bakker.

ABOVE

Plaza Design, Oostburg, early '90s

BELOW

Chair Designs, late '80s

LEFT, LARGE IMAGE

Sportfigure Pin, early '80's
22k, plastic laminated newspaper photograph

LEFT, SMALL IMAGE

Newspaper Necklace, late '70s
plastic laminated newspaper
Photograph by Jos Ramakers

LEFT

Eyeglasses, late '80s
plastic, glass

RIGHT

Shadow Bracelet, late '60s
22k wire
Photograph by Ton Baadenhuijsen

It was after making his stainless steel pieces that he began to work with industry as a designer. Beginning in the '70s he could support himself from royalties. And he has regularly taught, moving between schools in Arnhem, Eindhoven and Delft. Right now he is not teaching, but he heads the "People & Living" department in an innovative program at Eindhoven. Each department head is a professional who would not have time to actually teach, but who is hired to "give direction." Bakker oversees five instructors, sees the work of the 25 to 30 students, and does final critiques. He participates in "strong confrontations," but he is less involved in students' lives and so has a certain detachment. He goes to the school once every two weeks.

He is also involved in advising industry, but he remains independent in that sphere, too. "It's a constant fight to stay free as an individual," he says. He likes best to sit with a sketchbook, to draw and write. "I think I live in my work, but 80 percent of the time is given to other things, organizing exhibitions, PR, etc.," he says ruefully. He thinks that one must create the environment one needs, because there's always a danger of losing oneself.

So who is he now? "For sure I don't see myself as a goldsmith. I'm very handy but I don't want to be a maker, it takes too much energy. I never wanted to be a little guy behind a bench. I like the activity with the world," he says. Bakker can catalogue his skills and shortcomings: "I'm absolutely not a colorist, so I could never be a painter. Form comes first, and expression of the material itself." His work, like the art he collects, has "no handwriting"; he sees that as a consequence of his time, the '60s, when young people were seeking a universal way of expression, outside of the self. He believes he continues to operate under that orientation, for example in his use of journalistic photographs rather than personal images.

"I'm a curious person," Bakker adds, and that's part of the reason design is gratifying for him: "I have to find it myself." Recently he has done street furniture and lighting fixtures for the city of Arnhem, and lighting fixtures that give structure to a market space in the village of Oostburg. "I don't like to do interiors, but to do environments where there is something to tell. Between industrial designs, which take years, these commissions, if accepted, get *done,* which is very satisfying." Jewelry, for him, is the most liberating of his activities, like child's play. "All that I've learned in life," Bakker says, "I learned through my jewelry."

Janet Koplos is an associate editor for Art in America.

Notes

1. Antje von Graevenitz, "Instruments of Radical Thinking," in *Broken Lines: Emmy van Leersum 1930–1984,* 's-Hertogenbosch, Museum Het Kruithuis, 1993, p. 24.

2. Interview with Gijs Bakker, Amersfoort and 's-Hertogenbosch, the Netherlands, June 5, 1993. "Gijs" is pronounced something like "Hice," but with a gutteral, throaty "h."

3. A good source of information is *Gijs Bakker, vormgever: Solo voor een solist,* the bilingual catalogue of his retrospective exhibition held at the Centraal Museum, Utrecht, Holland, in 1989. The book and show were both aspects of Holland's Françoise van den Bosch Prize, which he was awarded in 1988.

KATHLEEN O'ROURKE

Refusing to Fit In

BY ELLEN BERKOVITCH

Santa Fe jewelry designer Kathleen O'Rourke is describing a movie whose opening shot shows a Celtic queen riding horseback, her fur robes flying, metal jewelry clanking. "I'm attracted to women like that," O'Rourke says, laughing. "Like Wonder Woman, or Virginia Woolf, Georgia O'Keeffe; women who do what they do and resist all the pressures to fit in. They have inspired me certainly, but I'm not nearly so brave."

On closer inspection the comparisons – from a fictional 'can-do' television heroine to a maverick, individualistic artist – seem apt. O'Keeffe, a fellow New Mexican who moved full-time to the state in the late 1940s, lived out her life rendering the canyons and mesas, flowers and bones of the Southwest into realistic and abstracted shapes. The assignment of meaning to her work was most correct, from the artist's point of view, when it joined up with a kind of sensory, experiential recognition on the part of the viewer. An anecdote O'Keeffe once related concerns a canvas wherein curvy strips of pink dissect the blue, run alongside it, meander here and flow wide there. While the painting was hanging at a museum exhibition O'Keeffe came upon a man saying to his companion, "They look like rivers seen from an airplane." "I felt pleased," the artist said, "that he saw what I saw."

Such simplicity conveyed through shape and composition is at the heart of the jewelry designs O'Rourke creates. She describes her technique as "very primitive but it works for me."

Juxtaposing the commercial popularity – and affordability – of O'Rourke's work with her self-definition as a designer whose methods are simple, one is reminded of the Wonder Woman character: Nobody runs O'Rourke's business for her, she runs it herself. Even that could be amended to say that *the business* just about runs itself. "People ask me what to do to get out there, and I don't really know," she says with characteristic frankness. "I didn't have to do much except make the jewelry and it generated the business. I'm grateful. I'm lucky."

No one taught O'Rourke how to make jewelry. The only class she ever took (in sawing and soldering) was 20 years ago at the University of Arizona. Like Chauncy Gardner in *Being There* (he "liked to watch"), O'Rourke taught herself a simple fabrication method by watching her then-husband work and fiddling around with hardware-store tools and sheet silver and brass. In 1987, upon winning her biggest account with The Golden Bough, a chain of stores, O'Rourke hired two full-time employees to help with her production. When the recession hit, she let them go. Today she proudly shows off a streamlined operation and a higher level of efficiency with which to produce the new designs that her clientele requires.

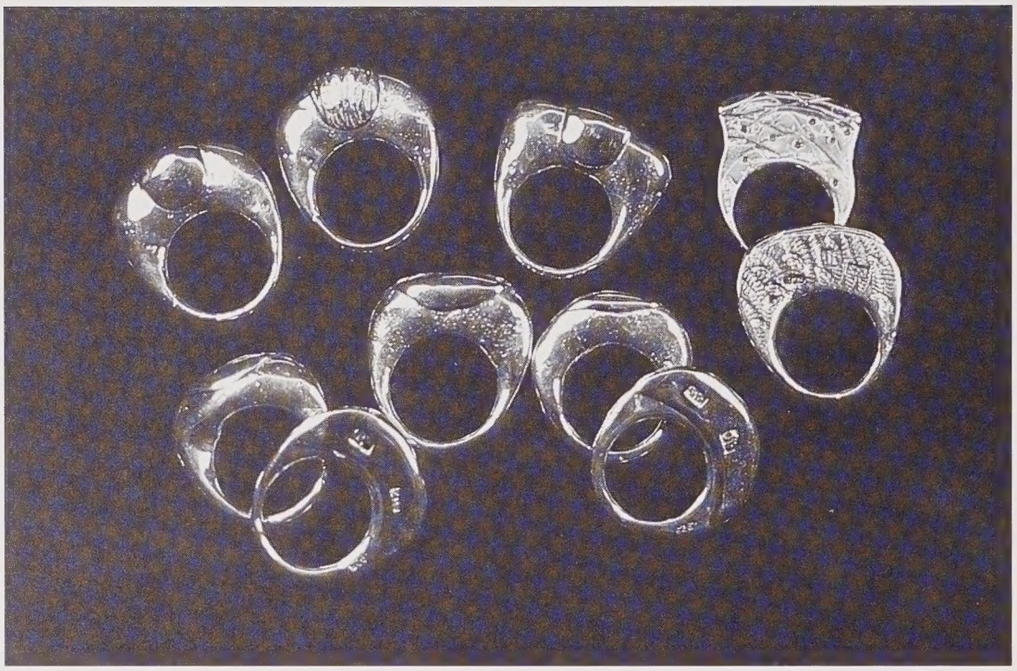
TOP TO BOTTOM

Earrings (three pairs), 1987 - 1993
sterling and gold
plated sterling, yellow bronze

Bracelets, 1984 - 1993
sterling, yellow bronze

Koros, 1986 - 1993
sterling and yellow bronze

ALL PHOTOS
ARE BY THE ARTIST



O'Rourke's aesthetic is concerned with pure metals. She used stones in the very early years, but since defining her style, has not continued using them because "stones seem superfluous to the work." The shapes she fabricates occasionally take on a "stone quality." Two bracelets, *RI 1* and *RI 2* are punctuated with a chunky piece of silver or brass, set off center. "RI" stands for "river stones"; she imagined the shapes during a camping trip with her husband. In O'Rourke's vocabulary, the metal doesn't have "topics", but it has "pieces" and "chunks." Its aesthetics are understated, functional, and wearable. To O'Rourke, pieces must work, and "work" means that the object provides the wearer with the tactile, sensual qualities of movement, fluidity and integration with the body – a subtle and decorative enhancement.

Seven years ago marked O'Rourke's "change," when, persuaded by a jeweler friend that she needed to subcontract more of the work, she left her originals with an Albuquerque caster. The originals from the 1970s and '80s that she continues to show have a cherishable quality. One wants to be feel them, as if the forms reveal their process of evolutionary development, long before any trips to the caster.

The beginnings of O'Rourke's jewelry making coincided with the end of her first marriage. Most of her early pieces were large, flat-hammered silver, inspired by Egyptian and pre-Columbian designs. She made a linked belt of elaborate brass eagles, wings outspread and overlaid with silver feathers and each one with a turquoise eye. After the belt she created arm-cuffs to be worn above the elbow, large earrings, and a breastplate that draped from the collarbone to the back.

By 1972 O'Rourke had met Michael, her second husband, who worked at the Arizona Sonora Desert Museum "and could bring home lots of feathers". His zeal for animal life – badgers to seals – helped inspire many depictions in metal. O'Rourke began working more dimensionally, fabricating pieces out of sheet to get double layers that would be rough on the outside and smooth on the inside. "I never drew anything," she says. "I used scrap silver and had a strong feeling about the size and shape. I would start with a heap of scrap on the board, a tool in one hand and a hardware store torch in the other, with the tank balanced on my shoulder. I'd heat the metal to a viscous state and work it like clay. At a certain temperature I'd cool, quench, hammer and heat it again. I did this three or four or five times until I'd get the texture and shape I wanted and start working with a hammer, then file and grind [the work]."

By the late 1970s O'Rourke had added rings to her line and was making *Koros*, which is her name for the pendants grouped together and worn on cords. These biomorphic forms were hand-fabricated from silver, copper, and brass. Old Navajo stamps became another inspiration and tool for O'Rourke. The stamps which have symbols from Navajo cosmology are used to create gridded designs directing both the form and the iconography of the pieces. Today the stamps are always near her hand at the workbench.

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LEFT TO RIGHT

Rings, 1984 - 1993
sterling, yellow bronze, and copper

CBS, 1989
sterling

Bracelets, 1984 - 1993
sterling, yellow bronze

O'Rourke says that the years after 1982 of coming to grips with some difficult times in her past marked her transition to becoming a serious jeweler when she began her first experimentations with steel. The first were ring sets with steel backs, and bracelets with steel and silver overlay. Texture became all important. She would use the Navajo stamps to create and visually complex surface designs while she explored the notion of wearable architecture in combined groupings.

The intractability of the steel posed the biggest challenge for the artist. "I was hand sawing from 20-gauge steel and it took a long time to get the shape out. It was a long process where I had to figure out how to solder other things to steel. You learn what the right temperature is because if it gets too hot, the steel will oxidize and get a crusty layer on it and won't solder at all." Yet, it finally was her ability to work the steel that propelled both her aesthetic and her career forward. A two-sided steel and silver domed bracelet provoked much publicity.

Important source materials for O'Rourke are the gifts that friends give her on her October 31 birthday: Halloween kitsch, death-head stuff, and some more serious objects. Another unusual source is weapons which, for O'Rourke represent one of the highest design aesthetics. "I love folk tradition arts, from simple, tea ceremony pieces to sword-making with its more elaborate processes," she says. Therefore it's fitting that an African wrist knife hangs alongside many of the hand milagros that friends have given her, talismans to protect those parts of us we most need and value from harm.

Increasingly, the demands of her business have left her with less time for herself, and she says she's now feeling the need for one of her periodic, self-renewing getaways. Even though her professional life over the past seven years has involved subcontracting parts of the process to casters, she still involves herself in the processes, not wanting to loose those moments of discovery. She fabricates the models in metal and later solders and assembles all the cast pieces by hand. Link bracelets have became a large part of her inventory – big, ergonomic links with designs on every piece, and charm bracelets that she produces with surface etchings.

"In looking at what I've done I see I have almost gotten more primitive, not more complicated and slick. I just went back to what works to do new pieces.... I feel strongly that jewelry should be worn all the time. What's the point otherwise? It's like putting the good silverware away."

"With subtlety something can be extremely rich and understated at the same time. I like my jewelry to feel good. I always wear it and handle it. I have my camping jewelry, my diving jewelry." O'Rourke laughed out loud recalling the last time she went on a diving trip with Syd, "it dawned on me later that possibly I should make diving an exception. I came out of the water, looked down at my hands (covered in glittery, shark-attracting rings) and said, 'that was good, Kathleen.'"

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ELLEN BERKOVITCH IS A WRITER WHO RESIDES IN SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO.

Celebrating a New Metals Order

SNAG CONFERENCE REPORT

1993

BY JULIA BARELLO

The theme of this year's SNAG conference, held in Cincinnati Ohio, "Celebrating a New Metals Order" was theoretically and geographically broader than in previous years. The inclusion of European and Canadian speakers from diverse market niches, as well as the number of panels which planned to address critical concerns in education and in SNAG supported the concept of re-evaluation and expansion. I attended the conference to see if my interests and concerns as a recent M.F.A. graduate and newcomer to teaching would be reflected in this New World Order of Metals. Viewing it through a filter informed by a background that emphasizes the examination of structure and relationships through analysis, criticism, and dialogue, I found the conference addressed some relevant issues, though more by implication than by directness.

Among the many relevant issues one of the most cursorily addressed was that of appropriation from non-western cultures. In a discipline that has historically sanctioned the appropriation of style, technique, and imagery from other cultures and time periods, I'm curious as to why there is not more discourse on the subject. Particularly in light of current debates in education, art, and popular culture, I would think that the issue of appropriation would have been a critical component of the "New Metals Order." Instead, I found such presentations as the one given by William Harper. Harper raised the specter of imperialism by proclaiming himself a multiculturalist, based on his use of images and inspiration from other cultures. Apparently unbeknownst to Harper, multiculturalism has more to do with an acknowledgment of diversity than indiscriminate lifting and modification.

On the other hand, Paulette Werger was certainly more current in her understanding of multiculturalism by acknowledging our indebtedness to other cultures. In her lecture on Ashante casting, Werger structured her talk to include theoretical questions, such as those dealing with the significance of historical and cultural context, and the implications of continuity and change within the Ashante culture. She clearly explained and illustrated the technical process, and discussed the application of these procedures to contemporary metal arts. While doing so she acknowledged the richness and complexity from which this technique originated.

German jeweler Wilhelm Mattar provided an overview of his own work and educational efforts in non-western countries which was in keeping with this idea of negotiating and facilitating the impact of diverse cultures. The artist recounted that while conducting workshops in Singapore and Morocco, he develops exercises which inform students in Western-based aesthetic, theoretical and technical approaches. At the same time, he encourages students to incorporate their own background and cultural influences into their solutions. His approach protects some cultural integrity, while contributing to the development of a New Metals Order which is global in scope. In this direct and insightful discussion of his work, Mattar emphasized the importance of context, and raised questions about whether aesthetic development was more critically based than end product oriented. These are valuable considerations as we attempt to re-frame our place both in popular culture and in the discipline of art.

Another serious omission of consideration at the conference was a different sort of appropriation; that related to questions of gender. This omission was most disturbing in lectures by William Harper and Alberto Alessi. Harper's lecture repeatedly raised the topic of sexuality, revealing his belief that artists need to become hermaphroditic (metaphorically I hope) to achieve perfection. During his discussion Harper raised interesting ideas such as the use of sado-masochistic religious myths imbued with notions of purity and struggle; but, his main focus was on the development and perfection of the female within himself. I couldn't help but wonder what had formed his definition and understanding of the feminine, and how he knew that he was expressing it in his work, particularly in light of some of his other comments regarding femininity and adornment.

Alberto Alessi of the Italian design firm Alessi s.p.a. came to a similar conclusion as did Harper, regarding a merger of male and female. Discussing the development of his design philosophy, Alessi emphasized an interest in working between polarities. He attempts to use design as a transitional phenomenon to link dichotomous opposites such as real/dream, business/culture, and by extension, male/female. As a result he has modeled his company and design philosophy after the idea of a 'good family', created from both paternal and maternal cords. Judging from his works it appeared that he defines the paternal and the maternal in terms of stereotypical symbols, married together in products. As with Harper's talk, I questioned what actual input women (not just the 'internal feminine') had in the development of these products and philosophies. Though there are historical and cross-cultural precedents for the effort to merge the male and female, I see these examples as representing an exclusion of the contribution of women in a time when the New Metals Order demands and requires inclusion. This is even more troublesome because both of these speakers are powerful representatives of their respective fields.

I did, however, appreciate Alessi's contribution on another level. His presence emphasized an effort to increase the geographic and market scope of an American discourse on metalsmithing while broadening the discussion about the relationship between manufactured and hand-made goods. Alessi was intent in his assertion that well-designed, well-manufactured goods satisfy a specific need for today's consumers. In light of this, I was curious if he had considered the relationship of 'fine' manufactured products to handcrafted work.

Controversy about how to define the direction and assess the health of the field was reflected in numerous presentations. During a panel discussion on issues in education the question of the relationship of metalsmithing to technology was raised several times. There appears to be a fear that as applicable technology expands, metalsmithing, as many people apply it, will become marginalized by it's craftiness – we'll become practitioners of a denigrated art. This notion seemed coupled with the assumption that newness and innovation are tied inextricably and exclusively to technology/technique.

Posed in a manner oblique to this apprehension was an inquiry into the significance of and necessity for the hand-made/well-designed object. That question begged the definition of well-made and well-designed, or 'quality'. This reference to quality was raised by such diverse practitioners as Wilhelm Mattar, Alberto Alessi, Harriet Estelle Berman, the education panel participants, and Jocelyn Gobeil in her lecture on her gallery philosophy. Yet, there was neither a clear delineation of measurable characteristics nor a refuting of the concept. This lack of clarity may well contribute to the dis-ease voiced both by students and professionals.

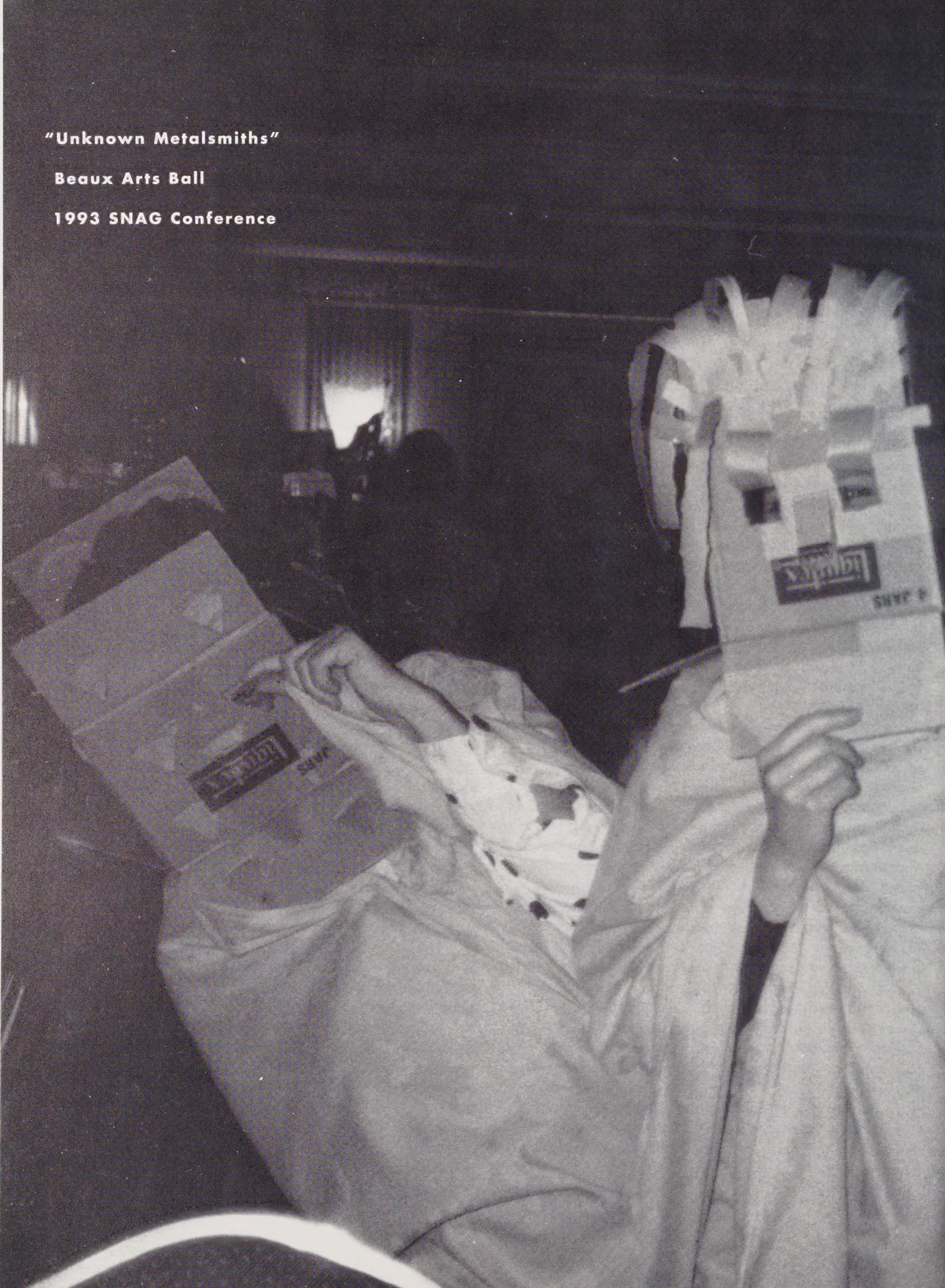
The discussion of the importance of the hand-made additionally posited that these objects fill eternal human needs (which should give us all a degree of job security). But, lacking, was a comprehensive discussion that included the influence and impact of economic issues, spirituality (tied to objects), and fetishization. To better understand the impact of the fruits of our labor, practitioners in the New Metals Order need to critique not only our internal processes, but the public impact of the objects that we make and put out into the world.

At the same panel there were disheartening queries by students who questioned the future of metalsmithing. While acknowledging the dearth of jobs, they wondered how well their education prepares them for teaching or more likely the unknown future. These questions went unanswered, though some participants attempted to refute the fear that job opportunities are diminishing.

The final presentation by Kathleen Browne wrapped up the conference in an intelligent and positive manner. In "The Future Perfect: Activism and Advocacy" (which will appear in a future issue of *Metalsmith*) Browne provided a brief historical overview of crafts in the United States, which emphasized the necessity of applying theories found in both Modernism and Post-modernism to the field of crafts. She attempted to debunk the myth that there is no language of criticism available to metalsmiths, suggesting that we look to what written history we have, and develop further from there. She also outlined some of the necessary educational components for successful growth in the field that included the study of history, contemporary theory, technique, design, and critical thinking. Any attempt to truly create a New Metals Order will have to do just this.

As people who by design or (mis)fortune are categorized as metalsmiths, all that we do informs and creates the field. My hope for the future is that we define this shifting field more expansively through research and critique. And along the way, examine our categorizations, overlaps, disjunctions, and subversions, while applying the lively, contemporary and (dissentious) critical discourse which occurs around us in art and life to this field which is so full of potential. I believe that this is necessary to truly create a New Metals Order that is inclusive enough to offer room for the voices of many, and interesting enough to inspire active/conscious participation.

Julia Barello is a metalsmith who teaches in Las Cruses, New Mexico



"Unknown Metalsmiths"

Beaux Arts Ball

1993 SNAG Conference

Reviews

Overprotective Impulse
silver, onyx, found objects
2¼ x 2¾ x ½"
Photo by Lynn Hanrick

Nancy Worden

William Traver Gallery
Seattle, Washington
April 1 – May 2, 1993

by Matthew Kangas

While Pacific Northwest art jewelry is known for its use of found objects, some artists, like Nancy Worden, tend to surround such items with elaborately crafted casings of cast silver. Instead of working with Northwest jewelry godmother Ramona Solberg, Worden studied under Funk Art advocate Ken Cory at Central Washington University in Ellensburg before doing a graduate degree with Gary Nofke in Athens, Georgia. As a result, there is a loose, slumpy feeling to her pieces which accentuates their humor and narrative quality while giving the illusion of more informal, easy-going construction.

Each of the ten one-of-a-kind pins at William Traver used an eyeglass lens as a window into some symbolic or nostalgic container. The irregular ovals perfectly suit her deceptively casual arrangement of other elements and act as a compositional focus. With a marvelously broad range of subjects, Worden suggests that art jewelry can carry aesthetic content dealing with memory, society, psychology, and even politics at the same time it pleases the eye – and wearer.

The power of time and the ubiquitous character of everyday political symbols are two keys to the dreamy, remembrance-of-things-past quality in her works, *Runnin' Yo Mama Ragged*, 1992, with its Roman-numeral watch face, and in *Broken Trust*, 1992, an elaborate necklace wherein each eyeglass lens covers a presidential face cut from U.S. currency. Three of the lenses on the necklace are cracked, symbolizing the broken promises of American politicians over the years. Garnet and malachite connectors intervene between George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and the others. Heavy nineteenth-century Victorian jewelry is evoked as easily as the message of political disillusionment is conveyed.

Quick Fix, 1992, makes another point about American reluctance to face problems head on. Aspirins and decongestant pills are encased in a bifocal lens which is surrounded by silver arms grasping basic 'tools' such as a safety pin and pliers. Visions of television non-prescription drug advertising, among many other things, are humorously summoned up.

Also at the humorous end, *No More Bad Haircuts*, 1993, encases a lock of hair and a tiny diagonal sawblade beneath an oblong rutilated quartz. Over and over, Worden seems to remind us of the follies of our self-reforming vows, both as individuals and citizens. *Resolution to Lose*, 1992, has silver teeth above popcorn kernels, spoofing every overweight person's determination to eat lots and lots of popcorn as a low-fat 'treat'.

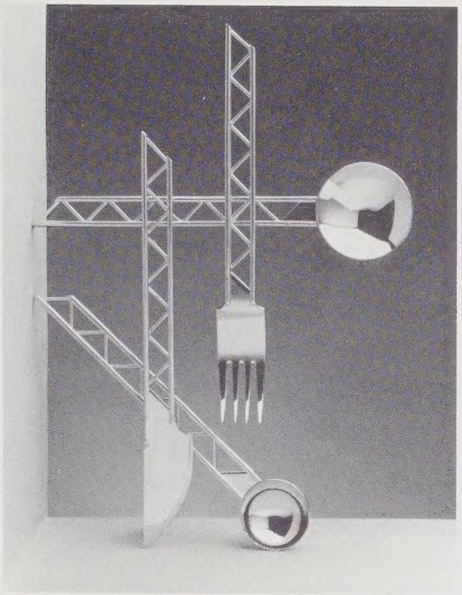
Overprotective Impulse, 1993, turns serious with a tiny silver padlock and chain over a folk-art painting reproduction of a baby. In this work, and in *More Home Repairs* , 1992, Worden draws our attention to issues of domesticity and the perils of child-rearing with gentle, witty warnings.

With their folksy interpolation of found objects, ingenious variations on the eyeglass motif, and sparing use of stones like onyx, citrine, amethyst and pearl, Nancy Worden has created the equivalent of a collection of short stories about a lost, rural America. Like southern writers Peter Taylor and Eudora Welty, she lulls us into a sense of superior appreciation just as we recognize that we, not her 'characters', are the indulgent targets of her sympathy.

Matthew Kangas, Seattle art critic and curator, has written about metal artists Phillip Baldwin, David Smith, and Louise Bourgeois.

RIGHT
Boris Bally
Trussware series, *4 Piece Placesetting*
fabricated sterling, riveted
Photo by Dean Powell

FAR RIGHT
Susan Provda
Ms. Firecracker
sterling, amethyst
Photo by Nancy S. Donsley



Urban (G)litter

Aaron Faber Gallery
New York, New York
July 6 – August 28, 1993

by Lynn Brunelle

You love it. You hate it. It's vast and varied. It's wild, wacky, full of sharp-edged indifference and ironic humor. It's romantic and beautiful. The city is a mosaic.

The urban landscape is the basis of inspiration for 15 artists in the invitational show called *Urban (G)litter*, organized by Patricia Kiley Faber, at the Aaron Faber Gallery 666 Fifth Avenue, New York.

It is not difficult to be enthusiastic about this collection of viewpoints forged, folded, and fabricated out of metal. To walk through the gallery is to be rattled by the variety of 15 unique urban experiences. The inspirations come from girders, maps, taxicabs, guns, stop signs, and Lady Liberty herself. Each piece has a story of its own.

The Statue of Liberty is the inspiration for *Ms. Firecracker*, a whimsical cosmetic brush by Susan Provda. The piece raises questions about connections between surface and facade and the deeper implications of beauty and freedom. Its spunk and wry wit, achieved through the collaging of cast sterling objects is reminiscent of Fred Woell's work.

Boris Bally's muse is of a more base and elemental sort. Bally's use of discarded street signs and pieces of rusted metal married with precious metals figures prominently in a compelling group of works exploring urban decay and industry. His *Large Shield Earrings* – oval-shaped pieces of rust with precise sterling rivets – evoke a sense of tribal simplicity. These are particularly interesting because although they look primitive, they are constructed of man-made materials that are slowly being reclaimed by nature. The pieces conjure up tensions between a pre-industrial and modern society.

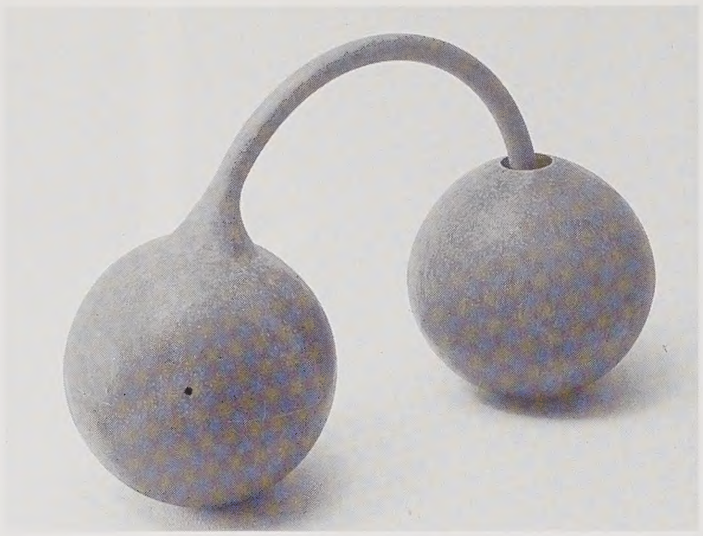
Rusted metal is not the only industrial inspiration for Bally. His *Trussware* series of utensils in the form of clean, sterling girder beam is a marvelous homage to structure. These pieces are disconcerting and beautiful as they link faceless industry with an act as intimate as eating.

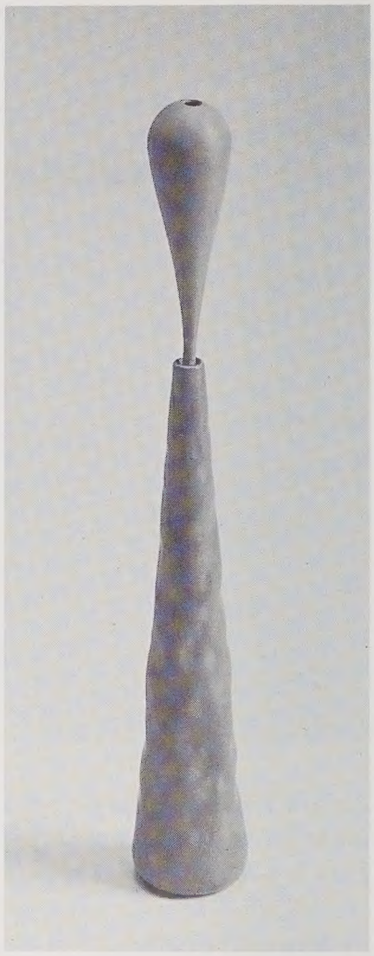
Another highlight of this dazzling city tour is the elegant sweep of curves in a sterling bracelet by Peggy Eng. It explores the quiet, spiralling grace of a phone cord. This is perhaps the most understated of the group and it allows for a lovely moment of respite in an otherwise highly charged show.

Jennifer Burton's *Late Night Menus* brooch reflects a familiar city experience. With the title stamped into it, this brooch is fabricated from sterling, brass, copper, and 14k gold, and peppered with amethyst, green tourmaline, and pink tourmaline. The very essence of this piece suggest nothing so much as a late night Chinese food binge.

With its landscapes, personal experiences, intimate moments, wonderfully whimsical objects, elegant whispers of design based on industrial lines, and found objects metamorphosed, *Urban (G)litter* is a dazzling kaleidoscope as vastly varied as the city itself.

Lynne Brunelle is a metalsmith, writer, and editor.
She lives in New York City.





Jonathan Bonner: Inversions

Peter Joseph Gallery
New York, New York
May 13 – June 19, 1993

by Jaimie Epstein

ABOVE
Inversion #7, 1993
patinated copper
31 x 48 x 19"

RIGHT
Inversion #13, 1993
patinated copper
8 x 1¼" diameter

In mathematics the word "elegant" is used to describe an exceptionally creative proof of a hypothesis. It is also the adjective that springs to mind upon taking in the sweep of Jonathan Bonner's *Inversions* at the Peter Joseph Gallery. And it is no paradox that the word so easily crosses the boundary between art and science and becomes part of the language of either field of study, for it is the dialogue between these seemingly polarized disciplines that Bonner would have us entertain.

It is also no paradox because Bonner takes his inspiration from mathematics and topology, from Klein bottles and Möbius strips, both of which toy with the concept of surface. As if there could be any doubt about the seed of Bonner's artistic curiosity, he has said: "Each piece consists of a form that reverses on itself, turns half inside out. The outside form is a continuation of the inside form, inverting at the bottom. The inside becomes the outside."

Patinated copper is the medium for Bonner's surface games – for playing with principles of physics, biology, geometry, and mathematics. His sculptures challenge our perception of the physical world, shake us out of the safety and complacency of thinking that what we see is all there is to see. Instead of the modernist: "what you see is what you get", Bonner gives us the opportunity to see more and therefore get more, to peer over the edge of our reality to find that even if the Earth were flat, we would not fall off. There is no edge, no end to the form, for in the beginning is the end and in the end is the beginning.

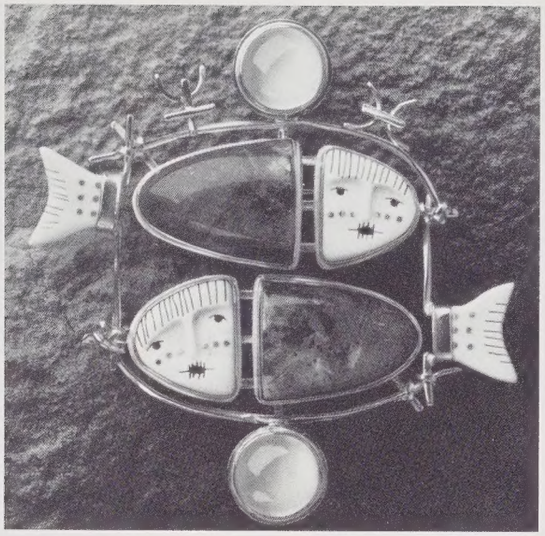
Bonner's grandfather was a glass blower, and although Bonner eschews topology it's hard to resist making the leap from a youngster's fascination with a mass of molten glass becoming a goblet, for example, to the principles of topology: "Studying those properties of geometric configurations that are invariant under transformation", as Webster's Ninth puts it. In addition, his microbiologist father's preoccupation with exploring the elemental substances and forms that are the basis of life seems to have provided Bonner the substance and form of his own artistic journey.

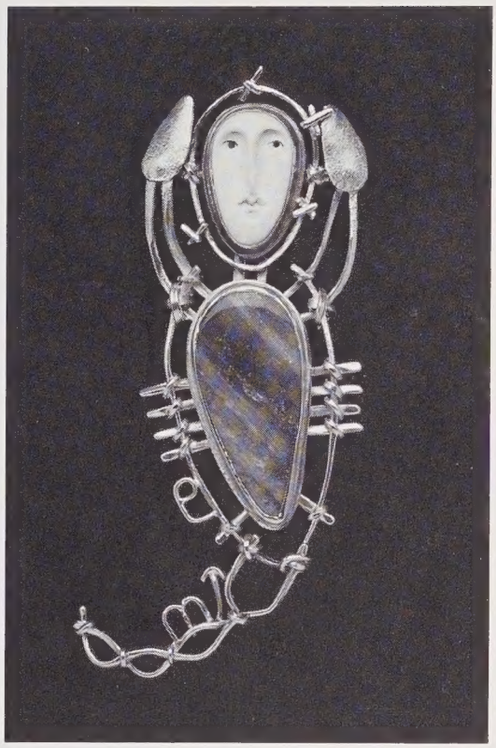
The Möbius strip that Bonner makes of science and art couldn't be more clear: one tiny sculpture is, in fact, a representation of a molecular form Bonner père is working on. Yet, the spatial gymnastics of other pieces demand further investigation, as spheres, cones, cylinders, football, torpedo, and hot dog shapes interconnect, forging the inner and outer surfaces of one another so that the truth of the concept can be fully comprehended only by peering inside or underneath.

Francis Bacon said: "It is an easy passage from miracles of nature to miracles of art", and while miracles of nature evolve over geologic time, miracles of art have no less arduous a birth. Why should the viewer expect to be spoon fed along the road to epiphany? Bonner's sculptures offer not only an aesthetically delicious meal for the eye but also dessert for the mind – with the added bonus of finally understanding those multidimensional graphs of time and space that made no sense in high school.

Jaimie Epstein is a writer and editor who lives in New York City.

RIGHT
Pisces [brooch], 1993
18k, sterling, cowbone,
Labradorite, moonstones
2½ x 2"





Carolyn Morris Bach
Zodiac: Celestial Beasts

Susan Cummins Gallery
Mill Valley, California
May 3-29, 1993

by Matthew Kangas

ABOVE
Scorpio [brooch], 1993
18k, silver, boulder opal, bone
3 x 1¼"

What can an art critic writing about jewelry do when Carolyn Morris Bach says, "I don't think it [jewelry] is art. I think it is a craft and should be pursued as a craft." Just what does that mean? Even though she won a 1984 NEA fellowship, apparently Bach contents herself with the parallel-but-equal status of craft at a time when other artists are falling all over themselves trying to attain art's greater recognition and credibility.

Given that, it is still this critic's right to judge her work as art – and as craft. With an elaborate cover story in *Ornament* (Spring, 1993), it is also a little hard to take seriously Bach's claim to a Rhode Island journalist in another article, "One thing I don't worry about is fame." All the same, her Susan Cummins show this spring was a substantial, unified body of work.

Although she told Cathleen McCarthy in *Ornament*, "Being cute is the kiss of death in the arts" this is precisely the problem she faces in her current figurative work. Yes, the Zodiac is one way of organizing a theme and, in her individual interpretation of the twelve sun signs, Bach has shown great powers of imagination while keeping each figure connected to its recognizable attributes. By choosing to personify the zodiac, she has lent considerable visual interest to each pin.

The only problem is the faces: generic, stylized, and – ulp! – cute. The ironic thing is, everything around the faces is brilliantly conceived and crafted. Fascinatingly intricate, they border on becoming miniature sculptures but, once claimed as such, they suffer by comparison to stricter standards of seriousness.

It seems that the diminutive, the dainty, the decorative, and the whimsical are somehow more acceptable in craft, allowing Bach her latitude to sentimentalize and cartoon. *Aquarius* cleverly sets a pale blue aquamarine at the base of linear silver "splashes" as if the stone were real water. *Libra* is a companion piece with the same full-length figure having only one arm to hold the scales. Both are enclosed by a loose frame of metal lines.

It's one thing for the symbol-holders to be people but yet another when the related animals are also personified with human faces. Danger: more cute territory ahead. *Capricorn* has a turquoise in the center of its animal body; *Scorpio* has a dark blue boulder opal for its body above a little scorpion tail. Even *Cancer* has a tiny head between two bone, crab claws.

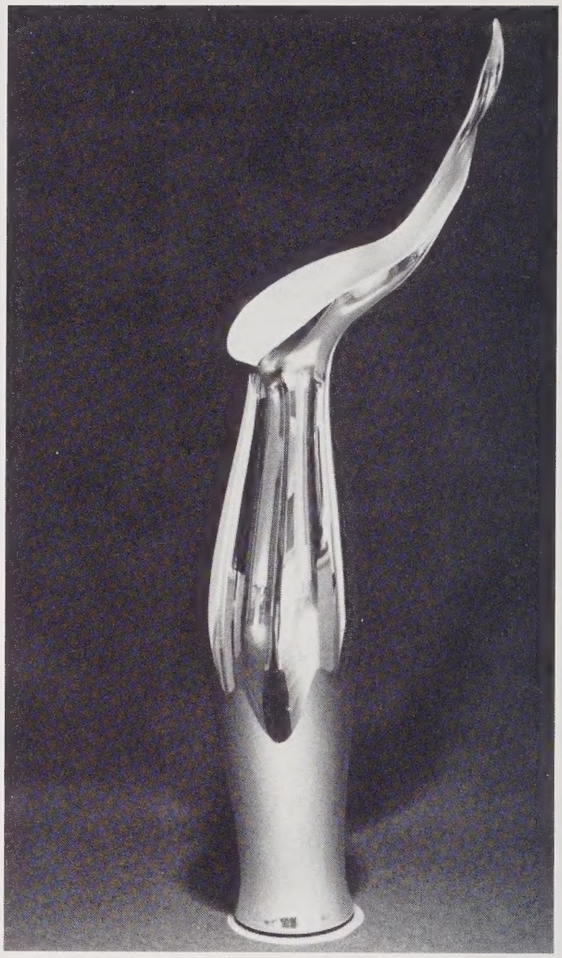
Bach's irregular line bends and curves around all the figures either hemming them in or acting as a formal organizer. The other pins and necklaces are less showy but perhaps more bearable. *Twig Goddess* uses bent copper as leaves and branches around faces for earrings and a matching brooch. As elsewhere, the faces are frontal, simple, stylized. Since this is a major decorative device for her and, after all, it's only craft, it's hard to be too critical of their repetitive familiarity. Still, one pines for a little more diversity of facial expression among them. We're not talking Modigliani here.

The point is, aesthetic standards for content and technique in craft should be no less stringent than for art. To separate out, dissuade, or demur from joining one category in favor of the other is disingenuous and pretentious. The exquisiteness of Carolyn Morris Bach's technique is laudable; it masks a thinness of ideas and a tendency toward the saccharine that could be avoided had she not insisted upon using the figure. Once that enters into the work, it will be judged like any other figurative work of art or craft: as a commentary on the human condition.

Matthew Kangas, a former Renwick Fellow in American Crafts, is a Seattle art critic and curator who writes for Art in America *and other magazines.*

RIGHT
Harold Rogovin
Water Kettle, Stand and Burner
sterling
10 x 20"

FAR RIGHT
Chunghi Choo
Peace Lily Vase
electroformed fine silver, copper
21" h.
Photograph by Steve Yusko



Artisans in Silver, 1993

Traveling Exhibition of the Society of American Silversmiths
National Ornamental Metal Museum
Memphis, Tennessee
June 6 – August 1, 1993

by Linda Raiteri

Showcased opposite the entry of *Artisans in Silver,* stood Chunghi Choo's *Peace Lily Vase.* It's clean, pure lines were echoed by a freshly cut calla lily placed two feet to its left. Thus, the tone of the exhibition was set.

It is this aesthetic sense, this combination of intuition and logic, which characterizes the installations at the National Ornamental Metal Museum in Memphis. Each piece is given its own space with an awareness of how it relates to and flows toward the next. There are no jarring juxtapositions. Each exhibition forms an organic whole, a completeness.

In an exhibit such as the *1993 Artisans in Silver,* which presents the work of 40 members of the Society of American Silversmiths, ranging in tone from the whimsical to the quite serious, this sense of unity is essential. These diverse objects offer images from the ancient to the contemporary, from the sacred ceremonial ware of Kurt Matzdorf to the light-hearted geometric *Slice of Life* cake knife created by Randy Stromsoe. There is the hardness of the sterling and gemstones Art Deco bowl and servers from Maryland artist Wendy Yothers and the softness of Marilyn da Silva's domed and arched handled *Put Out the Fire I, II and III* candle snuffers.

Leonard Urso's sculpture of a woman, *Sister,* and Chunghi Choo's *Peace Lily* exhibit silver as liquid, as fluid and flowing. A.E. Green combines materials in a set of contemporary wine cups using rosewood and ivory bands to warm the polished sheen of the silver.

At the top of the stairs leading to the second floor gallery is a water kettle with a stand and burner, a traditional piece by Harold Rogovin. In this work, more than any of the others, a narrative is felt. It is elicited by the small heart shape, which is the visual center of the piece, and emanating from that center is a feeling of comfort, of calm, of blessing.

Roger Horner's serving fork, and John Marshall's *Markell Vase,* are fashioned from sheets of mokume gane with excellent effect. Less polished silver has been used architecturally by Curtis Lafollette in his teapot which looks as industrial as a cappuccino machine and by Jack da Silva in his Memphis style pitcher. This range of works and methods offers a valuable overview of one of metalsmithing's most familiar materials.

Artisans in Silver 1993, a fine collection of works by contemporary masters, travels to the Noyes Museum in Oceanville, NJ, October 17 through December 26, 1993.

Linda Raiteri is a writer who resides in Memphis Tennessee.

The tossing waves, the foam,
the ships in the distance
The wild unrest, the snowy, curling caps –
that unbound urge and urge of waves,
Seeking the shores forever.

Walt Whitman

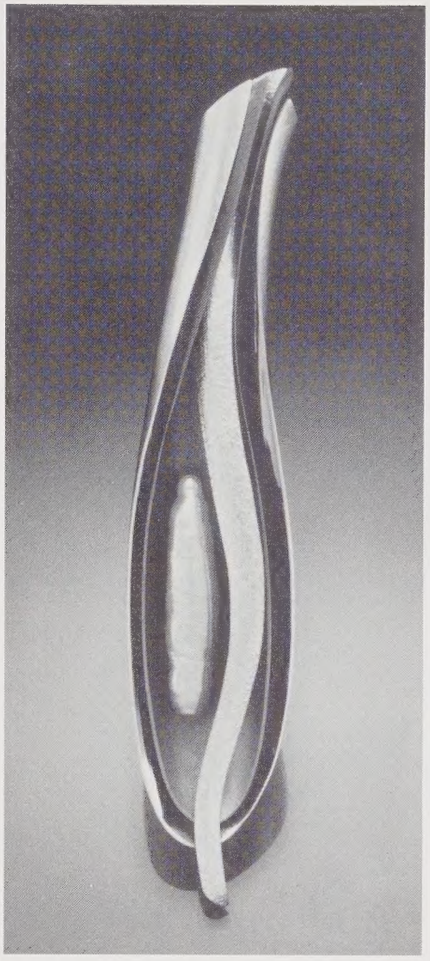
Metal is basically a liquid material;
a river of light that floats through space.

Betty Helen Longhi

Betty Helen Longhi: Liquid Metal

Creative Metalsmiths
Chapel Hill, N.C.
April 25 – May 25, 1993

by Ben Dyer



Early Spring, 1992
18k, sterling, stainless steel, niobium, pearl
4½ x 1 x ½"
Photo by Ralph Gabriner

The metal artwork by Betty Helen Longhi pulsates with a heartbeat of its own. She breathes life into her pieces from her inner world. In expressions that directly portray metamorphosis, rebirth, and the elusive mystery of beauty in nature, Betty Helen Longhi moves nimbly between images that suggest landscapes, sea waves, wind currents, and cocoon forms. Her work implies multi-layers of depth and dimension as a metaphor for Betty Helen's personal and universal statements.

The pendant-brooch, *Early Spring*, suggests an embryo or larva form, waiting, alive with a hidden source of light, a glow that comes from within, having survived the winter. The long Biwa pearl, within the cocoon shape, catches the reflected light and colors of the niobium and appears as a primal yet ambiguous life form: a subtle beauty. "Reflected color is about light not pigment", says Betty Helen.

Betty Helen's recent works, *Reflections Study #1* and *Reflections Study #2*, mirror a cool electric color that shines out from their edges and appears to be larger than the pieces themselves. Her *Long Pins* conjure up images of a double-exposure of waves on the ocean over a landscape of rolling hills and woods.

By a synthesis of her skills and her vision, Betty Helen achieves a mature integration of image, line and texture. She inventively comes to terms with a wide repertoire of techniques, combining various metals, electro-coloration, and finishes into long, fluid three dimensional forms, worked by anti-clastic forming, fold-forming, and forging. She uses thoughtful and playfully engineered connections and mechanisms for her fabrication and jewelry findings. Pearls and diamonds are sparingly used and effortlessly integrated into the artwork, as in her piece titled, *Windswept*, in which the pearls match the coloration of the niobium. Pieces are often designed for multi-use; pendants convert to brooches; earrings are made in removable layers to be mixed and matched. The fluidity of the images carries through to the changeability of the design and functions of the jewelry pieces. Changeability is about "a line moving through space" and on another level – "A change in time".

Betty Helen's versatility as a designer is evident in her body of work that ranges from small sculptural forms, to elaborate one-of-a-kind jewelry pieces, to her stylish production line of modular earrings, *A la Carte*, and the convertible series, *As You Like It.*

Historically, beauty has been associated with the best life has to offer, nature at its highest order, and the intellectual quality that is part of the mystical wonderment and awe of life on the earth. But in our present culture, a study of beauty and grace is not often recognized in the arena of serious art and artisanship as a valid vehicle for new statements. This is probably due to the modern reactions to the sentimentality and romanticism of the Art Nouveau movement and the trivialization of beauty by television ads and commercialism. We live in a cynical time of spikes, razor blades and thorns. Even so, beauty is a timeless quality and grace has a dignity still open to artistic interpretation. We need artists like Betty Helen Longhi, who look to the regenerative energy of the uplifting and positive power of beauty to guide her hammer against the metal, furnish the electric currents that give color, and polish the surface that gives deep reflections.

Ben Dyer makes his livelihood as a goldsmith-artist and lives in the little town of Hillsborough, North Carolina.

Jewelry Invitational

Mobilia
Cambridge, MA
May 25 – July 31, 1993

by Jan Baum

Mobilia gallery hosted its second annual *Jewelry Invitational* exhibition May 25 through July 31, 1993. The show was organized by owner Libby Cooper and included the work of thirty-six artists the majority of whom are American jewelers. The works included those from prominent artists: J. Fred Woell, Arline Fisch, Earl Pardon, Joyce Scott, Thomas Mann, Colette, Kiff Slemmons, Dan Jocz, Sandra Enterline, and Christina Smith. Certainly any one with an interest in who is making craft today would recognize this familiar roll.

However, the highlights of this show were its combination of newer faces and examples of the use of non-traditional materials. The richness and depth of Kris Patzlaff's jewelry is striking. The work does not demand the viewer's attention but simply beckons and then waits to be discovered. A predominant characteristic of the two dimensional work is their intricately decorative surfaces. They reference pseudo-hieroglyphics, Islamic decoration and computer chips, all of which are visually dense. The shapes upon which these mysterious surfaces are placed are reminiscent of banners, badges, and shields-traditional, information bearing forms. The combination of these surfaces, shapes, and other jewelry-like elements along with the use of oxidized silver, high karat gold overlay, and the monochromatic use of semi-precious stones, inverts one's specific frame of reference into an expansive one. These pieces are immaculately crafted and seem to emanate an overall spirituality.

An unusual highlight in this show was the work of Pier Voulkos. Most of her jewelry exemplified her ability to form polymer clay. Each was made of a necklace, bracelet and earrings and each had a distinct theme. Though I usually turn a blind eye to works of Fimo, one of this series caught my eye. It was based on bulbous plant-like forms. Each piece was made of clusters of bud-like forms striated with color. When worn the beads roll on the body, dancing with kinetic energy. Another series was made of flattened bead-like forms which contained colorful abstractions. Voulkos's manipulation of the polymer clay into volumetric forms adroitly exploits her coloristic abilities.

Many critics have advocated that craftspeople and crafts critics look to crafts history for what is useful, meaningful, and distinct about crafts (instead of looking only to art'). Historically, there are a number of roles that craft has filled. According to Bruce Metcalf in "Replacing the Myth of Modernism" (*American Craft,* Feb./March 93, p. 44): "Craft objects can stand back and offer commentary, propose reforms, advocate traditions or simply help people get by." Some of these characteristics can be found in crafts today. The work of Patzlaff addresses spirituality and exhibits a high level of technical virtuosity. Voulkos's work functions beyond utility toward aesthetic experiences. Janet Kopolos in "Considering Crafts Criticism" (*Metalsmith,* Summer 93, p. 10), cites Joyce Scott's beaded neckpieces as a prime example of celebrating "crafts own character". One of the primary functions of Scott's work is that of social commentary which she effects by threading beads into representational stories.

In K. Lee Manuel's work the viewer apprehends the gestalt of the artist's brightly colored and richly decorated collars at once. Manuel constructs, then paints intricate and repetitive patterns and images on collars of feathers. The feather collars allude to the ceremonial traditions of numerous non-western cultures.

The work of James Barker, Judith Kauffman and Luna Felix advocate the tradition of goldsmithing through the use of high karat golds and traditional techniques. Of these, Kauffman's work is the richest. She combines the gold with stunning purple opals and mobe pearls. Her characteristic layering and constructing has a sumptuous quality.

Humor is one way in which the crafts can "help people get by" (Metcalf). Yet, perhaps there should be a distinction drawn between humor and one-liners. The group of rings exhibited by Barbara Walter is a case in point. They are constructed mostly of silver and Plexi-glass bands set on ball bearings with extensions of various fabricated objects. One ring titled *Bull Only Ring* holds a tiny bull extended between two pieces of pink Plexi-glass shaped in the form of bread. The bull rotated around the wearer's finger. This piece along with another titled *Pig Out Dinner Ring* made me wonder if these were simply one-liners or if the viewer was to derive more significance from these objects. For instance, maybe one would wear the *Pig Out Dinner Ring* in order to remind oneself not to eat too much; *Bull Only Ring* would be worn when going to an occasion where there might be a lot of conversational 'bull'. Other visual puns such as *Motorcycle Touring* and *Pussy Footing Around* suggest that the intentions behind these works are simply one-liners. Is this humor?

In a show of this scale it is difficult to address the many important aspects of current crafts criticism. Many of the artists' works have a pervading sensibility, that often touches on the whimsical and the fantastical. The selections also show a continued interest in those artists and jewelers who have established their reputations and choose to continue making works characteristic of their signature style.

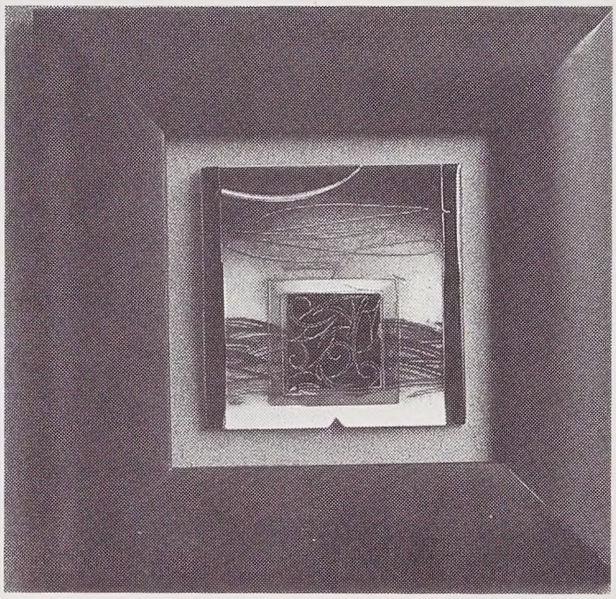
Jan Baum is a metalsmith who lives in New Bedford, Massachusetts

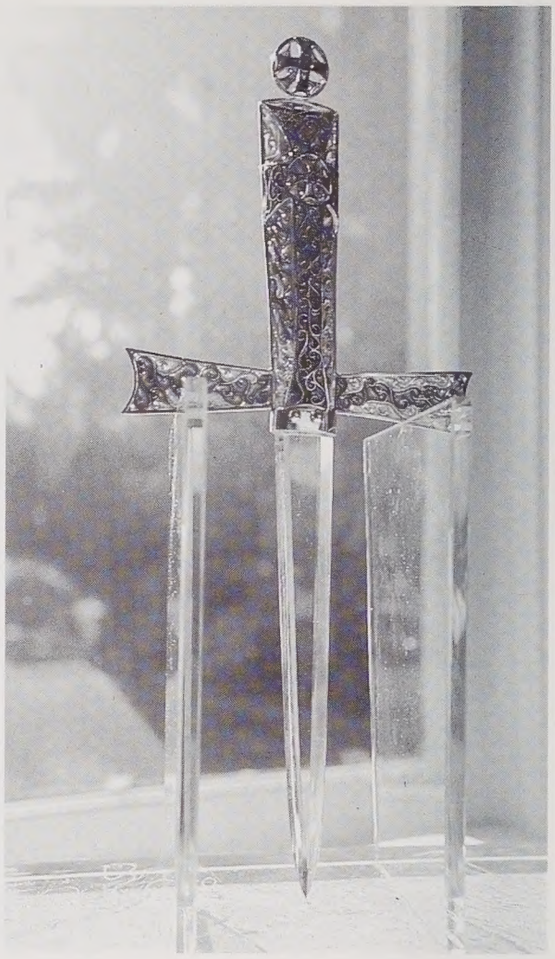
LEFT TO RIGHT

Colette
Portrait of Paolo If He Wore A Mask,
from *Calendar Series #4*
18k 22k, sterling, garnet, pearl, umba sapphire
1¾ x 1¾"

Pier Voulkos
Switch Neckpieces (3), 1992
polymer clay
Photo by George Post

Pier Voulkos
Triple Harry Earrings, 1992
polymer clay
4" long
Photo by George Post





Dynamic Limitations

Enamelist Society Juried Exhibition
Closson's Fine Arts Gallery
Cincinnati, Ohio
August 12 – 28, 1993

by Janice Hatch-Keaffaber

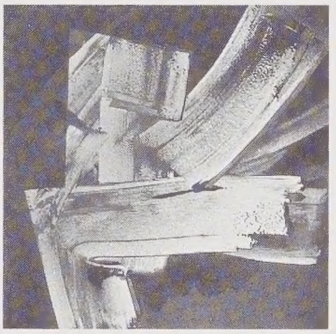
This exhibition, held in conjunction with the Enamelist Society's fourth convention, was a salute to the diversity and international scope of contemporary enameling. Jurors Harlan Butt, Fay Rooke and Mel Someroski selected 61 works representing 43 enamel artists from Australia, Canada, Cyprus, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, the Netherlands, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Venezuela.

The concept and title of the exhibit were created to challenge the artists, and all of the pieces were limited to the size restrictions of either 6 x 6" or 12 x 12". Enamelists who concentrate on panel or three-dimensional formats met the challenge most successfully, not surprising since their work easily lends itself to such limitations. In contrast, many of the jewelers struggled with the presentation of their small pieces, at times resorting to simply mounting them on mats inside frames of the prescribed size, a solution which became a distraction. The often eloquent and jewel-like forms were lost in large expanses of flat background.

Shannon Grant (Canada) and Valeri Timofeev (Russia) flawlessly executed three-dimensional works in traditional plique-à-jour, a demanding technique which eliminates the metal backing to allow light to pass through the enamel. Timofeev's series of six inch goblets and bowls dazzled the eye with intricate wire filigree patterns, capturing the cells of enamel into poetic forms which could have graced the Czar's table. Grant's twelve inch *Dagger*, a study in light-reflecting transparent blues, offered a contemporary interpretation of the technique, with the knife held by clear glass supports, making it appear to balance on the point of its beveled glass blade.

Carolyn Delzoppo (Australia) turned cloisonné on fine silver into ornamentation for the wall instead of the body. Her 2¾" square pieces were centered in wide black frames, enhancing the subtle shading of black and white tones which were acid etched to a velvet finish. In *Miniature III*, additional design elements were thoughtfully introduced with fine silver wire, then delicately balanced with a sweep of transparent color.

There were works from the United States that were notable: Audrey Komrad's cloisonné and fine silver foil wall piece, *Dreamworld*, a lyrical work of precisely controlled sea forms evolving from a sleeping woman; Rita Deanin Abbey's *Red and Chrysocolla*, a bold gestural statement in porcelain enamel on iron; JoAnn Tanzer's masterful linear abstractions, interactive plays of multi-layered designs.



The exhibition's most exciting work was a three-dimensional table piece by James Doran (Canada). Working in a kind of conceptual realism, Doran used electroformed copper and enamel to create a fool-the-eye, is it enamel or is-it-real tableau, intriguingly titled *It Takes All Sorts to Run Away from Home.* An enameled red and white bandanna held the runaway's treasures: a school photo thumb tacked to an apple, a baseball card, pieces of candy, a pencil, and a black knight from a chess set. The work teased the viewer on both artistic and intellectual levels, simultaneously generating speculation about meaning as well as technique.

Doran's work was a refreshing departure from the predominately abstract and pictorial pieces in the show. There were only a few other pieces which triggered emotion or thought. Unfortunately, this seems to be a common weakness in most enamel exhibitions. The precious quality of materials and the visual seductiveness of technique and color overpower creativeness of concept or message. Although this was a strong show of consistent quality, and the size limitation presented a measure of challenge to the artists, a narrative theme for future exhibitions could encourage an interesting investigation of meaning while retaining the medium's emphasis on craftsmanship.

Janice Hatch-Keaffaber is a writer, enamelist and political activist living in San Diego. She is a frequent contributor to Metalsmith.

A catalog for the exhibition is available through
the Enamelist Society,
P.O. Box 310, Newport, KY 41072

TOP ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT

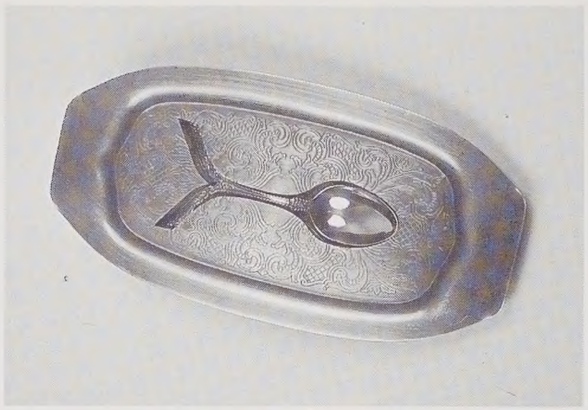
Carolyn Delzoppo
Miniature III
cloisonné on fine silver, wood frame
6 x 6"

Shannon Grant
Dagger, 1992
plique-à-jour enamel, glass
12 x 2"

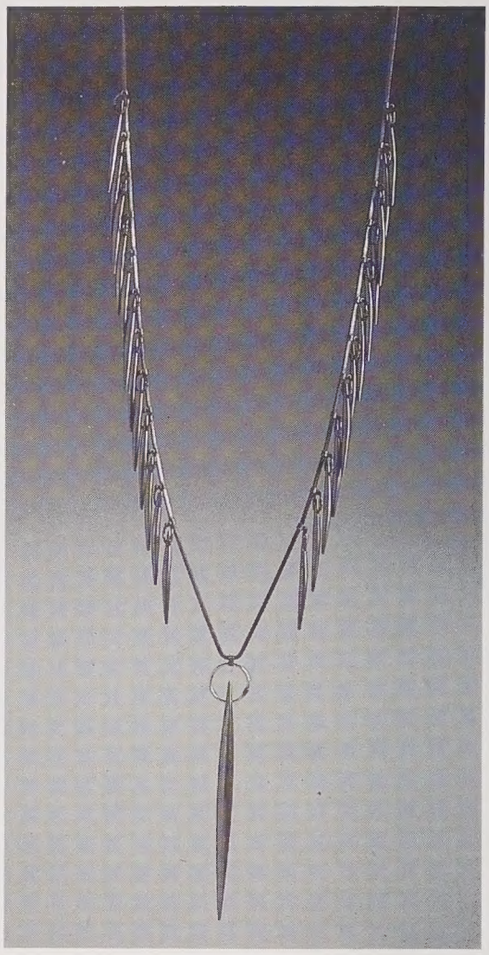
James Doran
It Takes All Sorts to Run Away From Home
electroformed copper, enamel
12 x 12 x 4"

Audrey B. Komrad
Dreamworld, 1993
cloisonné enamel
12 x 12 x 1 3/4"

ABOVE
Rita Deanin Abbey
Red and Chrysocolla, 1992
Porcelain enamel on iron
12 x 12"



Myra Mimlitsch-Gray
Plate Study #3, 1993
silver spoon, copper, found object
9½ x 5 x 1"



Rachelle Thiewes
Untitled (detail), 1992
silver, 18k, patina
30" (hanging length)

From the Fire

Adair Margo Gallery
El Paso, Texas
August 5 – September 17, 1993

by Beverly Penn

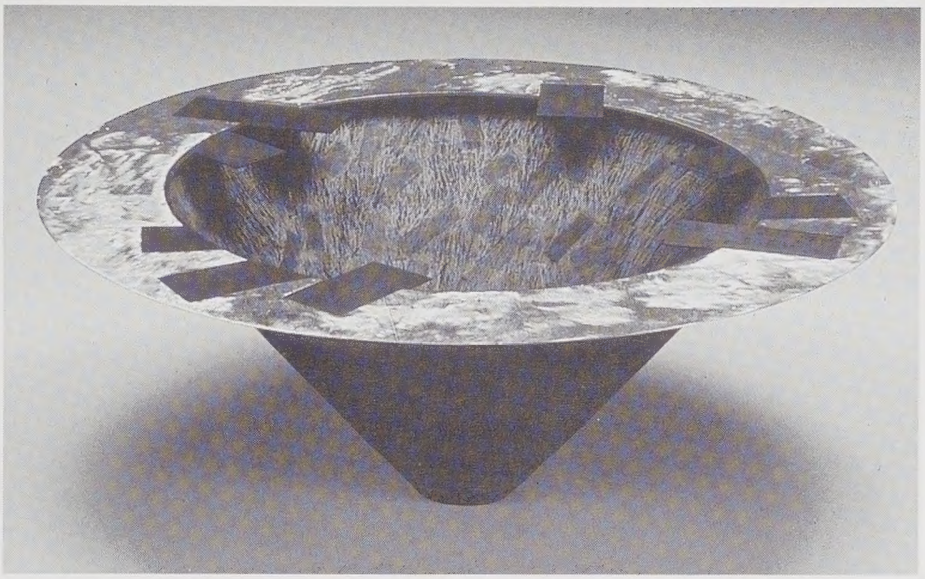
From the Fire is a straightforward exhibition. It features seven artists whose commonality is material and methodology: each transforms metal into art using the ancient rituals of fire: scorching, heating, burning, melting. Despite the unifying theme, the show is not focused on incendiary fascinations, obsessions, or technologies. These artists are atypical allies, and the thirty pieces assembled by director Adair Margo is one of the most diverse selections of jewelry, sculpture, and vessels executed in America within the past decade.

All of the jewelry in the exhibition is hung directly on the gallery wall, without pedestals, shelves, or framing devices to interfere with definition or assert value. Rachelle Thiewes's five untitled necklaces are long, rope-like, silver loops punctuated at intervals by slender beads and rings of gold, silver, or slate. In the installation "(the) wall is understood as an absolute space, like the page of book. One is public, the other private."[1] Each piece hangs just inches from the bright white wall, suspended from two hooks. Gravity pulls the loops into plunging triangles. Light floods the space. Each necklace is a metallic line. Each shadow is a dense dark twin. The created shadows are as predominant as the necklaces themselves. Light and form are equal. This unusual installation of jewelry does two things. First, the light unifies the five pieces into a single event that is experienced much like a theatrical or musical production. The pieces and their shadows dance like drawings in the wall. Though these necklaces are created from precious materials and are constructed with immaculate technical perfection, both their 'value' and 'finesse' are mysteriously concealed by the bath of bright, white light. The work shuns the pretension and self aggrandizement often suggested by jewelry and is instead a provocative, intelligent statement of light and form.

Second (and this may be the other side of the same coin), because the individual forms are visually dissolved by light the installation supports Thiewes's philosophy that her pieces are most articulate when they are worn, rather than when displayed. The gallery encourages viewers to wear the necklaces, and is accommodating and knowledgeable on this point. On the body these pieces have an unencumbered quality – there are no interfering mechanisms or awkward transitions – and they respond rhythmically to body movement. The final surprise is the subtle but fascinating sound that the pieces make when in motion.

Other work in the exhibition pushes and pulls at the architecture for its definition. Jamie Bennett's wall installations, *Red Scroll* and *Green Ribbon*, use vitreous enamel on electroformed copper and oil/polymer on paper. Each of the featured wall pieces balances two parts: a small framed painting and an object on a shelf. They seem of the world but not in it. In *Red Scroll*, both the painting and the object are each colorful versions of a wilted tendril planted in a sensuous, bulb-like vase. The two-dimensional image is framed in thick, dark wood, and the three-dimensional object is poised atop a heavy ornate wooden shelf. The painting serves as a document of the object, while the object is material evidence of the painting. Everything seems heavily anchored to the wall by the dark wood accouterments. The work is narrative yet cryptic, like an ancient codex or a Japanese haiku. In this posed fiction a dying vine form pushes its way out of the vessel with the energy and solemnity of a monocarpic plant, which flowers and fruits but once in its life: a dramatic fecundity followed by death. The painting of this event is sealed away behind glass, like a preserved document of some historical fact - it seems an ill-timed, impatient, pre-mortem memoir of the dying vine and luscious fruit. Embodied in this piece is that moment between blooming and dying: the dialogue of the two elements is their equivocation of will and fate.

Myra Mimlitsch-Gray
Plate Study, 1993
silver spoon, copper, found object
9½ x 1½"



Helen Shirk
Reprieve, 1992
copper, brass, patina, prismacolor
22 x 22 x 8"

The exhibition features a remarkable range of artists who vary greatly in their creative concerns. Helen Shirk, Thelma Coles, Richard Mawdsley, June Schwartz, and Myra Mimlitsch-Gray each represent equally divergent perspectives in metal. Mimlitsch-Gray deconstructs both the forms and the potential meanings of autonomous found objects. She alters them, then organizes them into four curious, dark orchestrations, *Plate Study #1* through *Plate Study #4*. Cutting daringly and dead-center into the pristine surfaces of antique metal serving trays, she hollows out a shallow niche in which to locate a precious implement, itself a peculiar reconstruction of an antique silver spoon. These silver implements embody both the metaphors implied in the original silver spoon form (sustenance, nourishment, privilege, etceteras) and those new meanings implied by the alterations: the spoons have been cut up, divided, twisted and reassembled into forms evocative of tongs, scissors, or weapons. The niches are precisely silhouetted cavities, referring to reliquaries or sarcophagi. As venerations of time and change, these pieces compress the past, present, and future into a single event. Mimlitsch-Gray's work derives its meaning not from art, but from the richness of material culture. Each found object is obviously altered from its manufactured state through very specific and meticulous fabrication by hand, but the work does not bear the notations of the 'hand of the artist'.

Rather, their technical perfection satirizes the formalist credo which designates the mark of the hand as legitimate voice of the spirit. Laced with double entendre and semiotic inquiry, this work is impervious to formalist criticism, and adds a new dimension to critical thinking in the field of metals.

This entire group of work is shown to advantage in the raw, essential space of Adair Margo's upstairs gallery. The brick archways and the other industrial characteristics of the exposed architecture reinforce the idea of altering space to accommodate an expression, and enhance the structural characteristics of metal as a medium for building, fabricating, constructing, and creating.

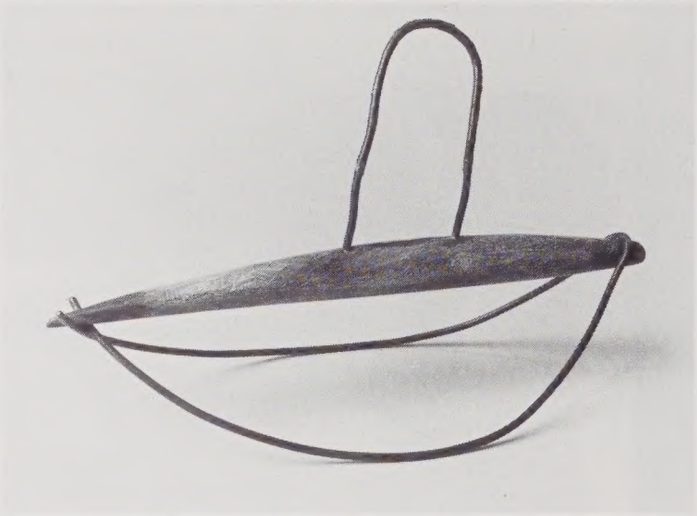
1. Sol Lewitt, commentary on "Wall Drawings" from the exhibition catalogue *Sol Lewitt* (New York, The Museum of Modern Art, 1978), 139.

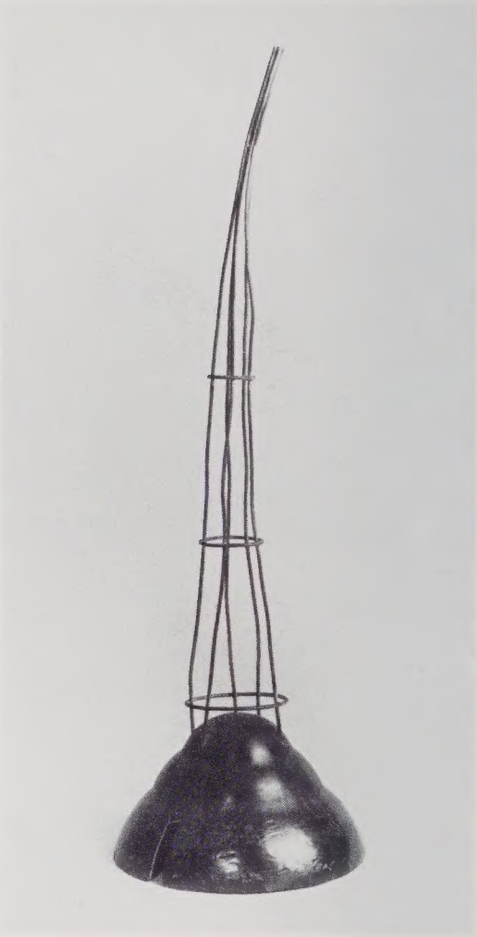
Beverly Penn is a metalsmith from San Marcos, Texas. Beverly is also the first recipient of Metalsmith's *Annual Award for Excellence in Metals Criticism.*

RIGHT
Cradle, 1993
wrought copper, paint
10 x 8 x 5"

FAR RIGHT
I'm Comin' Home, 1993
raised and fabricated copper, patina
34 x 14 x 14"

Photos by Alex Silva





Robert Griffith: Recent Work

Zoller Gallery, The Pennsylvania State University
University Park, Pennsylvania
September 27 – October 31, 1993

by Albert Anderson

Robert Griffith's recent work in copper, wood, and steel seem to stalk the viewer – waiting and watchful, silent, yet aware. They stand guard over the gallery space, evoking impressions of tribal images, totems, and primitive ritual objects. Some are solid and sturdy, others ethereal, almost spidery in their delicate linearity. The scale of the work is vertical and relatively small – from twenty inches to a little over five feet in height.

Several pieces have parts that appear machined to which are attached whimsical, irregular elements in metal and wood, or sometimes simply surface color to soften the geometry. Others are almost completely deformed yet somehow they remain structurally viable. All are immediate in their visual impact. One nominally figurative work, *Festiva*, combines pipelike cylindrical forms to which a coiled metal rod, raised weld beads, and other elements have been added. The surfaces are adorned with gold leaf, paint and vibrantly colored marks applied with paint sticks and oil pastels.

The works are constructed, for the most part, with familiar metal fabrication processes – raising, forging, forming, welding, and brazing, among others. In Griffith's case, the mastery of these processes borders on the virtuosic. However, the pieces do not flaunt technique. The construction is always subservient to the idea. In many cases, the processes are not apparent, requiring actual handling of the work to identify them.

Griffith, trained primarily as a metalsmith, was for many years a creator of vessels, edged tools, jewelry, and other quasi-functional and decorative objects. On a physical level, those forms are often evoked in the present work, with the addition of imagery of the metalsmith tools he actually employs in making such objects. In this sense, the work is both a record of the artist's journey and the baggage of his creative existence.

The pieces seem autobiographical in other ways as well. One of them, *No Moor,* suggests a narrative, perhaps of a boat swept away in a storm. Its painted wood and linear elements are reminiscent of fragments, of wreckage – symbols of the fragility and vulnerability of the craft on which we depend to carry us over life's waters. The element of decay, or perhaps more accurately of age, also enters the experience of this work as well as that of other pieces such as *I'm Coming Home.* The sagging irregularities, the patinas, the blemishes, and the bumps are all reminders of the dents and dings of human experience, of the inevitability of being run over by life from time to time in the course of living it.

One of the most successful works is *Sentinel,* a forged and fabricated painted and patinated steel sculpture approximately five feet in height. Comprised of three distinct rigid sections, the piece appears to move and sway as it points into the space. There are two contrasting vertical elements. One is geometric. On top, the other more organic form stands in precarious balance. Its horizontal, weathervane-like fin section reinforces the sense of movement with its delicate twiglike wire elements which are reinterpreted in the weld beads on the machined section below.

Griffith's art mirrors and echoes the breadth of the traditions of modern sculpture while going well beyond. Here and there the viewer catches a fleeting glimpse of an image reminiscent of a David Smith, a Beverly Pepper, an Alexander Calder, a Constantin Brancusi, or perhaps even a Martin Puryear. Yet, as soon as such images register they fade. What remains is an original and compelling body of work by a promising young artist.

Albert Anderson is a educator and critic living in State College, Pennsylvania.

Sentinal, 1992
forged and fabricated steel, paint
74 x 30 x 16"

Photo by Alex Silva

RIGHT
Armband (48), 1975
Series Beveled and Round Examinations
stainless steel pipe
Photo by Peer van der Kruis

FAR RIGHT
Collarpiece with fastener (11), 1966
silver, acrylic
Photo by Boudewijn Neuteboom

Broken Lines: Emmy van Leersum 1930-1984

Museum Het Kruithuis,
's-Hertogenbosch, the Netherlands
April 4 – June 13, 1993
(American tour in the planning stages)

by Janet Koplos

One might say that the bilingual catalogue of Emmy van Leersum's retrospective exhibition, *Broken Lines,* moves her into the realm of myth. As presented in the catalogue she matches, to a degree, the popular-culture stereotypes of the heroic artist: emotionally troubled, obsessed by her work, tenaciously overcoming obstacles, and a career tragically cut short by an early death.

But at the same time, the catalogue reveals her fully, both as an artist and as a human being – more fully than anyone besides her closest associates would have known. Essayists Antje von Graevenitz and Gert Staal have an advantage in not needing to tread carefully around the feelings and opinions of a living artist. While they approach her with sympathy (catalogues are not the place for attacks) they are even-handed and objectively analytical in discussing her rather late start as a jeweler; her overturning of conventions in form, material and presentation in the early work in collaboration with Gijs Bakker; and her development of an austere, exquisitely minimalistic aesthetic. There is none of the defensive 'special pleading' that mars so much writing about crafts.

One thing that is missing is a picture of the other jewelry of the time, so it's hard to keep in mind how extreme, how unexpected, van Leersum's work must have been. The best a reader can do is measure from her earliest work, the commissioned pieces of precious metals with precious stones. From their conservative elegance, like a slightly icy Art Nouveau, it is a jump to her increasingly Pop neckpieces – simpler, flatter, broader, larger – attached to basic dresses of her design. Those works link timeless shapes to time-based fashion. And it's an even bigger jump to the high aluminum collar that rises up behind the wearer's head like a halo, where drama comes before practicality.

In the retrospective exhibition held in the 17th century armory that is now Museum Het Kruithuis, these pieces from the '60s furnished a lively kickoff for the chronological presentation. But her subsequent jewelry (as well as the sweaters shown in the catalogue) is conceptually more rigorous and so consistently rectilinear that these first works seem to be aberrations. Their primary value may be that they marked the release from convention. It was a less-organic geometry that engaged her from the early '70s until her death, and problems of simplifying, ordering and conceptually clarifying seem to have been her essential concerns.

Gijs Bakker refers to a search for universals and a wish to avoid personal 'handwriting' during the '60s, and both would seem to have been characteristic of van Leersum's work. But it is also possible to see it as a continuation of Dutch abstraction, related to the regularity and nuance of Mondrian and De Stijl, just as it's possible to see those artistic expressions as having arisen from the flatness of the man-made Dutch landscape and the coolness of the northern light. Dutch art and design have tended to rationality more than to expressionism in the whole of the twentieth century, and van Leersum's mature work is very much in keeping with that.

Certain practices, such as working in a series, take on a larger meaning in this context: each work in a series is not simply a practical unit of production but is representative of a conceptual system. Van Leersum designed on paper (or by manipulating paper), and once she had her idea she worked through it in fine increments of variation. Such works as her thin, translucent PVC bracelets with a V-shaped notch stand alone as simple forms given a subtle fillip; but when they are seen in a row in the exhibition vitrines, or with their production drawings in the catalogue, they are revealed to be movements in a progression, each notch being of a different depth.

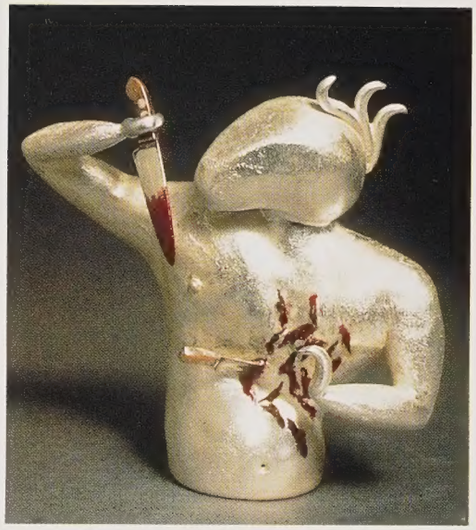
Some bracelets were conceived on paper as curves plotted through the center section of a square that was divided into three bands; in the finished work, where the plotted lines are absent and the center third is realized as a cylinder of stainless steel, the cuts may look rather free and unpredictable. There's some of that same apparent impulsiveness in brooches and bracelets whose elemental forms are barely disturbed by slices or pinches in the metal, and it is found as well in the overlap in bracelets that consist of a rolled-up strip of acrylic or aluminum. But none of these interventions is arbitrary. Bakker speaks of van Leersum's constant search "for controllable form in relation to the organic field of the human body." Her search was usually carried through all possible permutations of a given problem.

As executed in hard, modern materials, this obsessive thoroughness of van Leersum's makes each work a diagram, a model of intellection that nevertheless results in a surprisingly pleasing ornament. Fortunately, she was not one to be caught in her own success and did not restrict herself to these minimalistic and colorless works. She began to work with color through sandwiching tissue papers or textiles inside thin layers of PVC, and she used strips of nylon of pure blues, reds or yellows to make geometric collars and bracelets that were visually softened not only by the use of color but also by the more flexible character of the material. And in an entirely different direction, her plotted lines on paper seem to have attracted her so much in themselves that she produced a series of bracelets consisting of the intersecting lines alone; in these works she returned to precious metals. In all her work, her dogged pursuit of essences allowed nothing superfluous, nothing gratuitous. How nice it is for a viewer of this retrospective to see that hard thinking and reduction to basics does not mean the elimination of beauty.

Janet Koplos is an associate editor for Art in America.

RIGHT
Just a Few Pricks, 1992–93
brass, copper, silver plate,
nickel silver silicone caulk,
sewing needle, brown powder
2 1/16 x 3 x 1 1/4"

FAR RIGHT
6 Months Wasted, Month 1,
1992–93
electroformed copper,
sterling silver, sterling silver
plate, plexiglass, paint
3 1/4 x 2 x 1 5/8"



Keith Lewis
Cutting Losses

Susan Cummins Gallery
Mill Valley, CA
July 5 – 31, 1993

by Bruno Fazzolari

Jewelry, more so than most possessions, can be deeply personal stuff. By attempting to use jewelry as an expresive and even narrative medium, Keith Lewis effectively explores and exploits the possibilities for private and public experience of jewelry in his recent work at Susan Cummins Gallery.

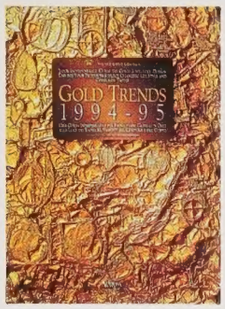
Most of the pieces detail varieties of grief and anxiety related to AIDS. Their small, rough, iconic nature places them squarely in the tradition of the *momento mori,* as both expressive vehicles for the maker and wearer. The nature of AIDS and grief is two-fold: public, political anger, and private, solitary anguish. Art dealing with the subject tends to fall to one side or the other of this apparent dualilty. Informed by the fact that grief is one of the most personal and lonely of emotions Lewis's work attempts to be effective and ritually useful, offering the viewer the opportunity to experience his own grief and to 'place' it somewhere. Many of the pieces in the show have private spaces knowable only to the wearer. *Just a Few Pricks* depicts a bloodied figure stabbing itself with knives. When turned upside-down, the torso forms a cavity lined with soft, inviting silicon textures, hidden among this, waiting for the investigating finger, is a needle.

Lewis's particular brand of figuration escapes the pathetic by invoking the absurd. These creatures, for they are none of them quite human, have the heads of birds with long beaks (or noses) that recall the masks of the *commedia del arte,* or the characters in "Spy vs Spy" from Mad magazine. As such the figures seem rather hapless and even comical in their misery. But amid the clowning is some serious business. Their comic associations are supplemented by strong associations of form with the mute and proud figurines of Cycladic and Etruscan Cultures, whose legacy is that of mourning and magic. In one pin, *Stealing Hair,* a copper figure is shown taking hair from an object on a pedestal (a museum piece? an altar?). Bursting from its hollow torso are stray strands of hair and on closer inspection the figure proves to be veritably gorged with the stuff. Materials like these are the ingredients of magic and witchcraft. They refuse the category of eternal, static, art object and move into the realms of the crucifix and other fetishes as useful emotional and psychic tools.

Lewis has explored the narrative capabilities of jewelry with fresh results. *Six Months Wasted* consists of six neckpieces, each holding a pair of pendants: one a sort of star (Lewis's symbol for the virus) encased in plexiglas, the other one, one of Lewis's birdheads/people-heads. The pieces are sequential: as the virus grows larger the heads become smaller. The wasting of the title could be a Proustian waste of time (time ill spent in the six months can take to test positive for the virus after contracting it) or it could illustrate the speed of 'wasting', a symptom of HIV disease in which someone loses weight and bulk within a mercilessley short period of time.

In choosing this medium to treat a particularly tricky subject Lewis has created some very direct and witty work which takles the emotional baggage that makes AIDS such an unwieldy subject. There is no pity here, and no whining. Lewis keeps an unsentimental distance towards the emotions and crisises which his figures are engaged in, but somehow their absurdity is not beyond our sympathy.

Bruno Fazzolari is a painter and writer who lives in the San Francisco Bay area of California.



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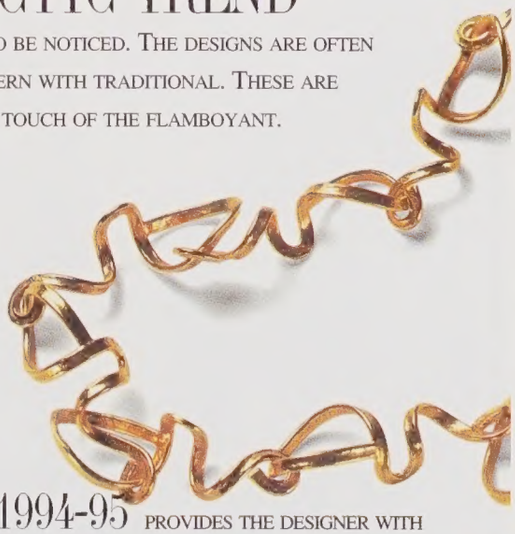

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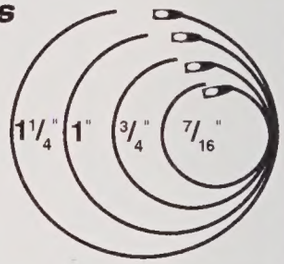

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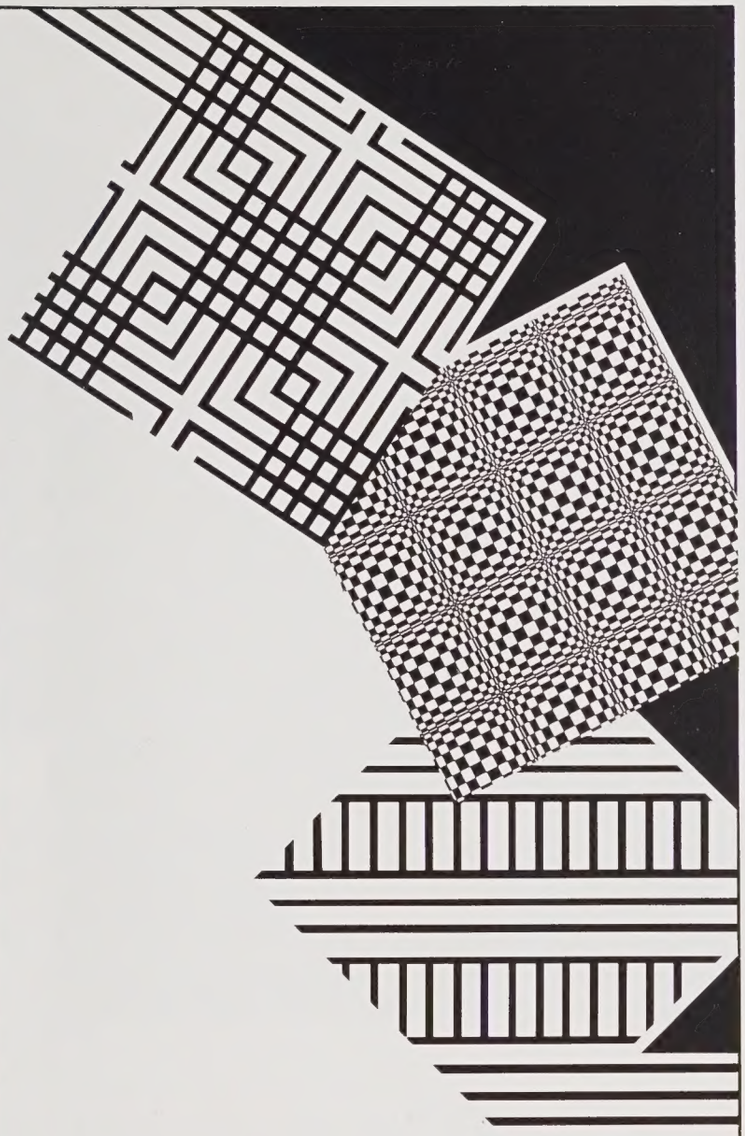

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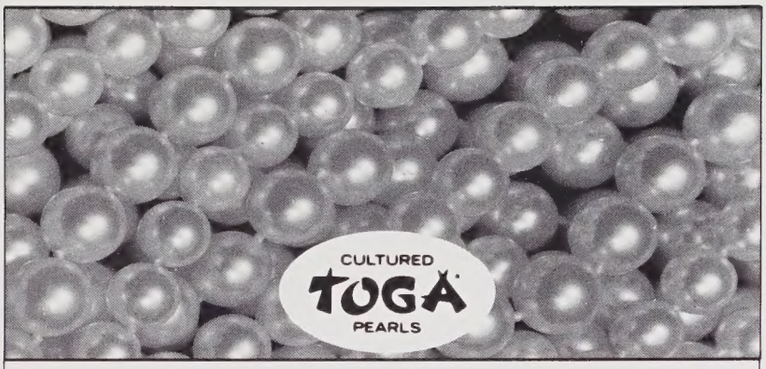

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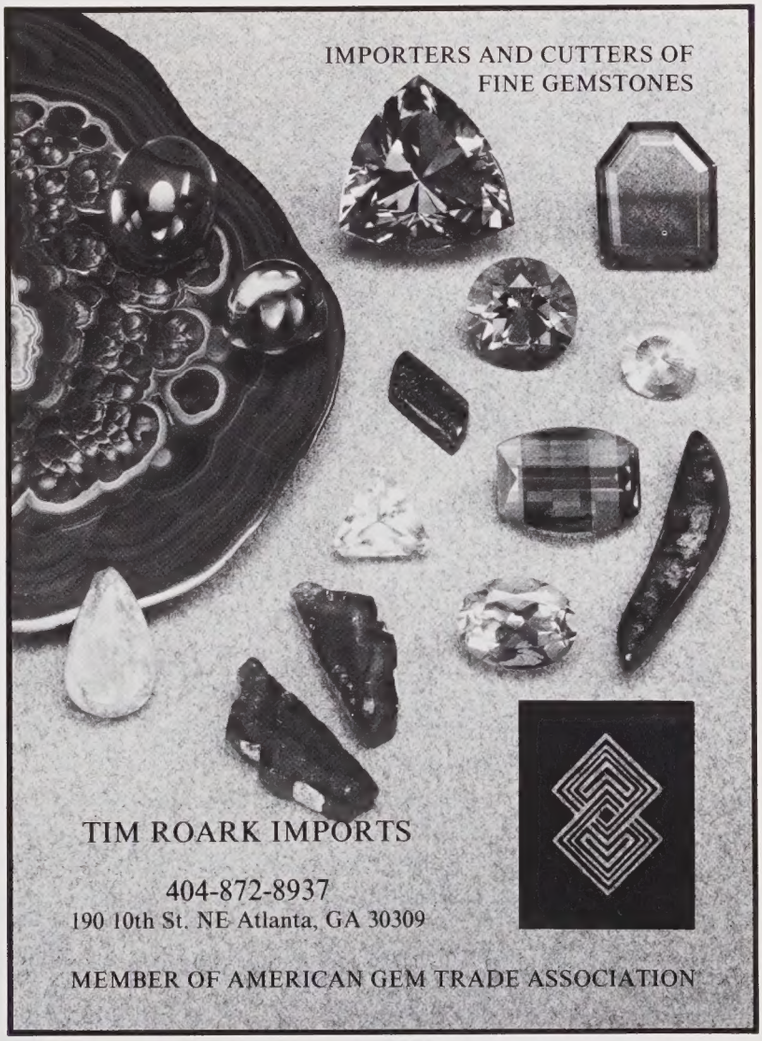

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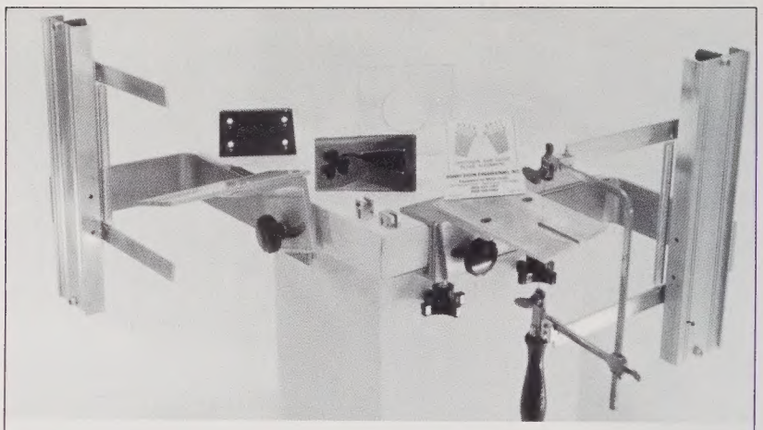

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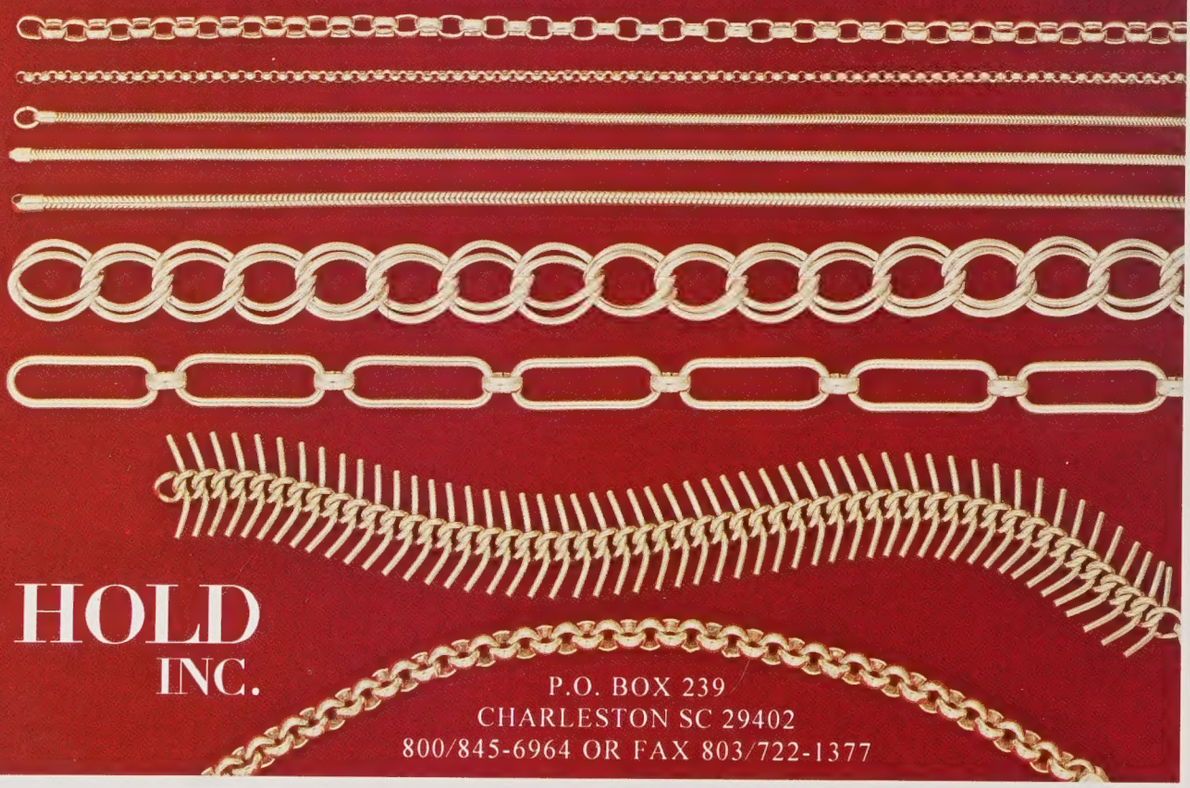

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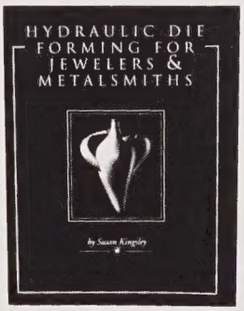

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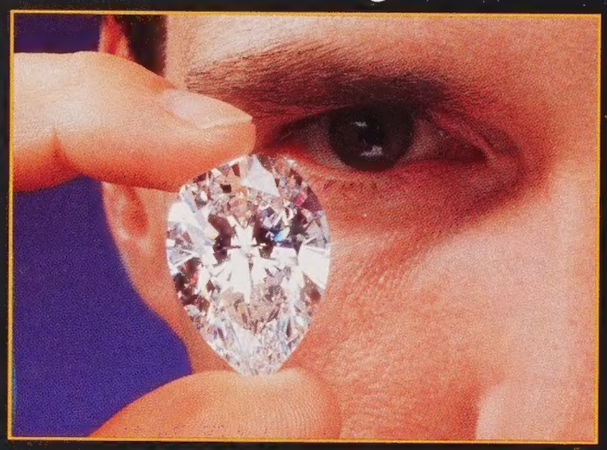

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On Saturday evening, March 19, MJSA's New York Gala at Tavern On the Green will kick-off Expo New York. In addition, various other networking opportunities will take place during the show.

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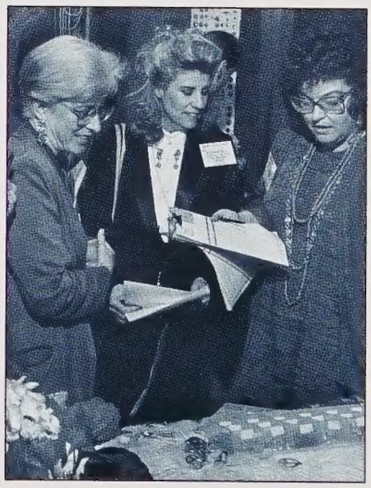

SEMINARS

Business building ideas are presented from the manufacturer's perspective. Sessions will answer questions on major industry issues including fashion trends, ISO 9000, marketing, and a nickel update, among others.

SOCIAL EVENTS

Inaugurating Expo Providence's move to a new facility, MJSA's Annual Banquet will take place Saturday, April 30, in the Ballroom of the new Rhode Island Convention Center on the eve of the Expo. Planned as a lavish evening of networking, dining and dancing, the Annual Banquet will give you the opportunity to renew old acquaintances, meet industry leaders, and enjoy a brand new facility.

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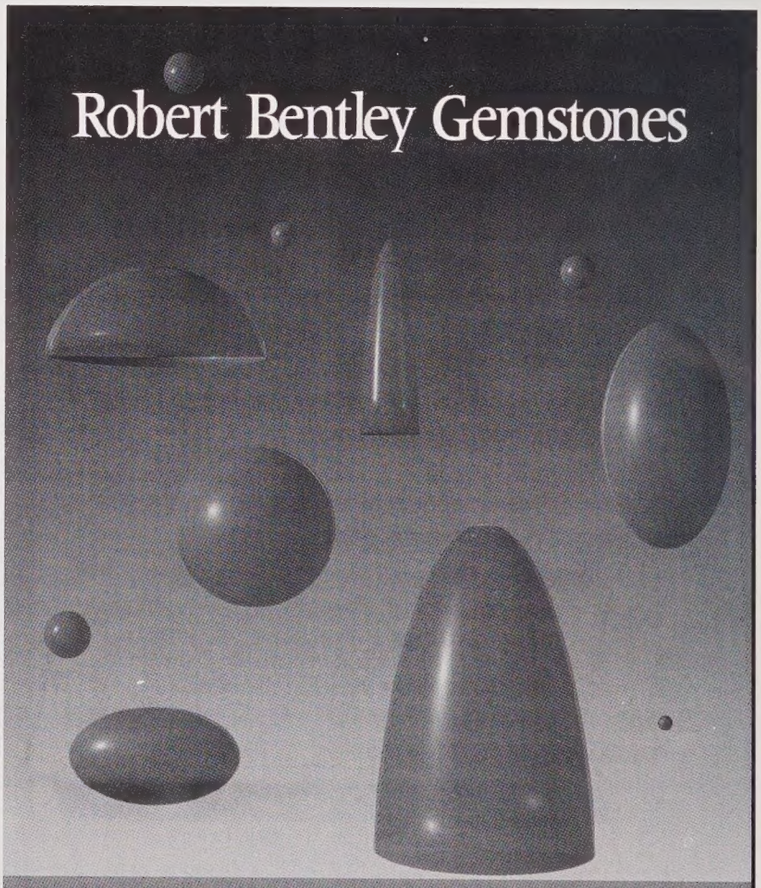

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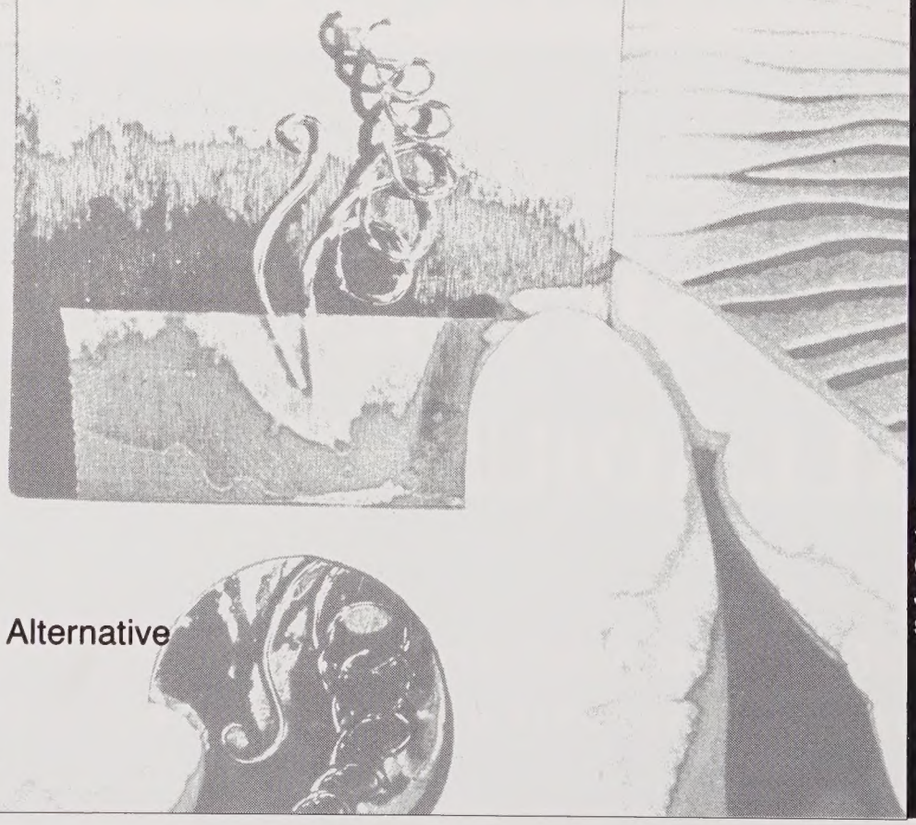

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Native American Storytellers: *Ed Edmo & Vince Wannassay*, Portland, OR.

Panel Discussion: *Susan Cummins* (moderator), Susan Cummins Gallery, Mill Valley, CA; *Keith Lewis*, Seattle, WA; *Kiff Slemmons*, Seattle, WA; *Sylvia Kennedy*, Manhattan Beach, CA; & *Donna Schneier*, NYC, NY.

Special Exhibitions: *North American Student Juried Exhibition*, Contemporary Crafts Gallery; *Mixed Media & Metals Sculpture Exhibition*, Blackfish Gallery; *Op Art: Eyeglasses By Jewelers*, Hoffman Gallery at the Oregon School of Arts & Crafts; *Seattle Metals Guild Members Exhibition*, Wentz Gallery at Pacific Northwest College of Art; *Creative Metal Arts Guild Exhibition*, Morrison/Rink Precious Metals Gallery. *For a Prospectus of the N.A. Student Juried Exhibition send SASE to Student Juried Exhibition, 2765 Kincaid, Eugene, OR 97405 or call 503/485-6224.*

Special Events: *Wednesday* casual dinner at the Hilton Hotel followed by bowling and Northwest Beer Tasting and Pin Swap at Grand Central Bowl; *Thursday* night gallery tour and box dinner; *Friday Night-on-the-Town*. Explore Portland nightlife, have dinner, go dancing, see a play or peruse the famous *Powell's Bookstore*; *Saturday Evening Banquet* with Wild Bill's Casino, gambling, dinner and dancing. *Since it is Easter weekend, information on churches, Mass and other related events will be provided.*

Vendor's room: Featuring suppliers of gemstones, tools and equipment.. Vendor's reception, art and tool auction and Snag Book Department.

T-Shirts: 1994 Conference T-shirts, 100% cotton - $15. May be ordered with registration.

Pre-Conference Workshops: *Metalsmith's Bench Tricks* featuring demonstrations by Eleanor Moty, Michael Croft, Philip Baldwin, Marilyn DaSilva, Jack DaSilva, David LaPlantz, Andy Cooperman, Dennis Werst. *Workshop dates:* March 29 and 30, Metalsmithing Department at the University of Oregon, Eugene, OR. Exhibition of the 8 workshop Instructor's work at The Museum of Fine Arts, University of Oregon Campus.

Make travel arrangements with *Journeys! Travel Agency* at 800/344-8890, ask for Casandra or Kelly. Special Oregon Tour Trips: contact *Journeys! Travel.*

Conference Fees: $170 for members; $185 for non-members; students with I.D. $94 for members, $105 for non-members. Fees must be paid no later than February 14, and covers all conference events. After February 14 a late fee of $25 per attendee will be charged. A cancellation fee of $25 per attendee will be charged prior to February 14 and $50 per attendee after February 14 . Tickets for special events may be purchased for guests. Those who subscribe to *Metalsmith Magazine* only must pay non-member fee.

An optional meal plan will be provided for 2 breakfasts and 3 lunches at the Hilton Hotel for $69.

Portland Hilton Hotel Rates: $99 for single occupancy per night; $99 for double; $119 for triple; $119 for Quad. City hotel tax is an additional 9%. Hotel reservations must be made by February 14 and secured with a deposit of credit card. After this date, room reservations are accepted on a space and rate available basis.The Portland Hilton is located at 921 SW 6th, Portland, OR 97204, or phone 503/226-1611.

All members of the Society of North American Goldsmiths will receive a registration brochure. Others may request the brochure by writing **SNAG** '94, 3245 SE Alder Court, Portland, OR 97214.

The above information is subject to change without notice.

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Membership

The Society of North American Goldsmiths

The Society of North American Goldsmiths (SNAG) was formed in 1970 to promote contemporary metalwork and jewelry. Through its publications, services and advocacy, SNAG serves the fine art and jewelry communities. SNAG's publications and conferences provide technical information and critical insight to practitioners and teachers of metalwork. Professional metalsmiths, students, collectors, gallery owners and enthusiasts make up the dynamic mix of the Society.

Services

The Society's annual conference provides a forum for the exchange of many points of view. Speakers of national recognition offer stimulating discourse on a range of topics. Members of the Society attend the conference at reduced rates.

The Society sponsors important exhibitions of contemporary metalwork. Past SNAG shows have been mounted at the Renwick Gallery, the St. Paul Museum of Art and several galleries in New York City. These exhibitions are usually restricted to members only.

The Society maintains an audio-visual library, which contains the portfolios of distinguished members and other notable metalsmiths. Members can rent slides, films and videotapes at a nominal cost.

The Society operates a discount book service, through which important texts on all aspects of the field can be ordered at a reduced price.

Publications

Metalsmith is the only magazine in America devoted solely to the metal arts. Please see the reverse side of this page for a detailed description of this exciting magazine. Membership in the Society includes a subscription to *Metalsmith.*

The *SNAG Newsletter* is published bimonthly and is available to members only. It features timely information on exhibitions, work-shops, conferences and job opportunities throughout North America.

Membership Categories

The Society offers several types of memberships, each tailored to a specific level of involvement in the field of contemporary metalsmithing.

- *General Membership* ($45) is open to everyone and includes subscriptions to *Metalsmith* and the *SNAG Newsletter,* reduced conference fees, access to all of SNAG's services and full voting privileges.
- *Student Membership* ($35) is offered at a reduced rate to any full-time student attending an accredited educational institution. This membership offers all the advantages of a *general membership* but does not carry voting privileges. Please send a copy of your student ID with membership application.
- *Institutional Membership* ($45) is available for nonprofit organizations such as schools and libraries. Institutions receive *Metalsmith* magazine and the *SNAG Newsletter.*

Checks (drawn on US banks) should be made payable to SNAG, in U.S. dollars only. Contributions are deductible within legal limits for tax purposes. Allow eight to ten weeks to receive your first copy of *Metalsmith.*

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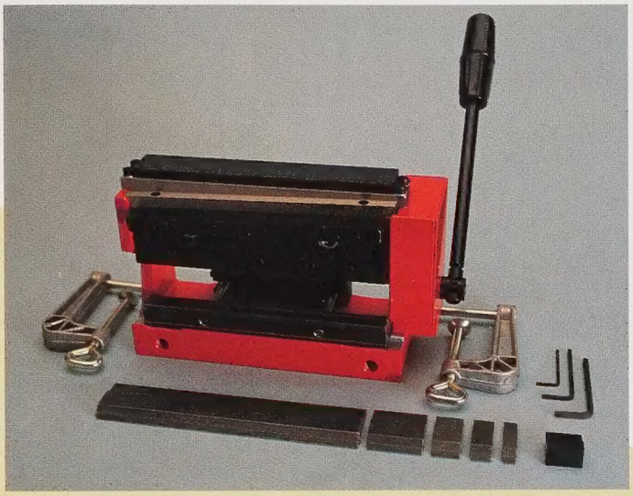

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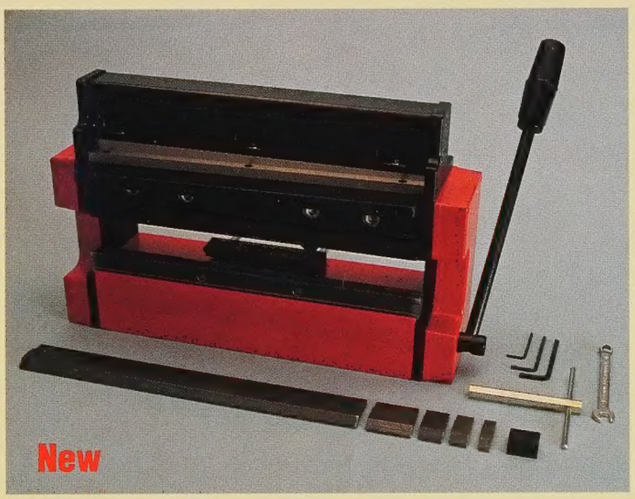

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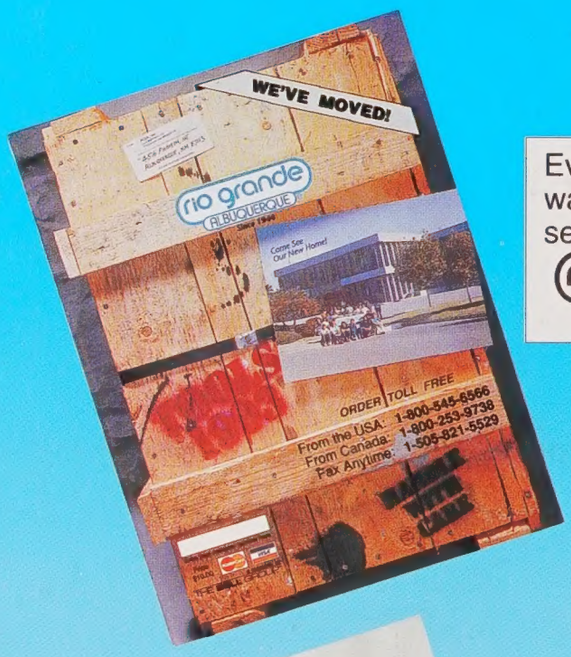

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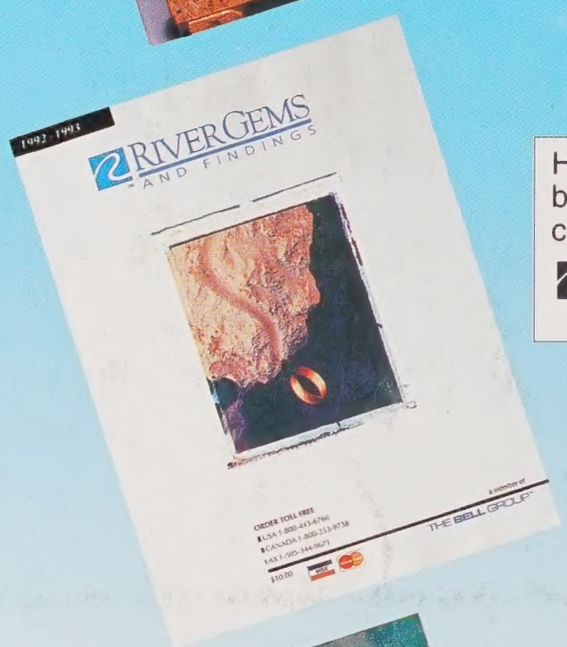

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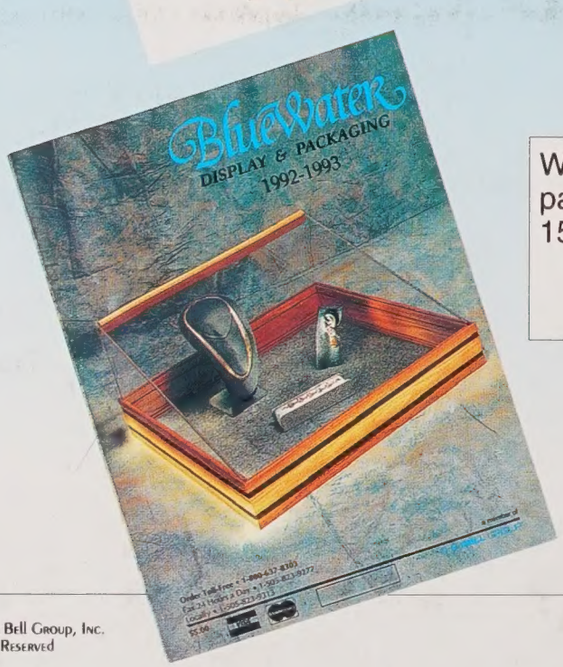

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